

PD SHORT STORIES

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AN OLD ARITHMETICIAN

from the Internet Archive etext of the 1889 Edinburgh publication of
A Far-Away Melody And Other Stories, by Mary E. Wilkins

A STRONG, soft south wind had been blowing the day before, and the trees had dropped nearly all their leaves. There were left only a few brownish-golden ones dangling on the elms, and hardly any at all on the maples. There were many trees on the street, and the fallen leaves were heaped high. Mrs. Wilson Torry's little door-yard was ankle-deep with them. The air was full of their odour, which could affect the spirit like a song, and mingled with it was the scent of grapes.

The minister had been calling on Mrs. Torry that afternoon, and now he stood facing her on the porch, taking leave. He was very young, and this was his first parish. He was small and light and mild-looking ; still he had considerable nervous volubility. The simple village women never found him hard to entertain.

Now, all at once, he made an exclamation, and fumbled in his pocket for a folded paper. "There," said he, "I nearly forgot this. Mr. Plainfield requested me to hand this to you, Mrs. Torry. It is a problem which he has been working over ; he gave it to me to try, and wanted me to propose, when I called, that you should see what you could do with it. "

She seized it eagerly. * Well I'll see what I can do ; but you and he mustn't make no great calculations on me. You know I don't know anything about the arithmetic books and the rules they have nowadays ; but I'm willin to try."

" Oh, you'll have it done while Mr. Plainfield and I are thinking of it, Mrs. Torry."

" You ain't neither of you'done it, then ? "

"He had not at last accounts, and I have not," replied the young man, laughing, but colouring a little.

The old lady's eyes gleamed as she looked at him, then at the paper. " I dare say I can't make head nor tail of it," said she, "but I'll see what I can do by an by."

She had something of a childish air as she stood there. She was slender, and so short that she was almost dwarfed ; her shoulders were curved a little by spinal disease. She had a small, round face, and a mouth which widened out innocently into smiles as she talked. Her eyes looked out directly at one, like a child's ; over them loomed a high forehead with bulging temples covered with deep wrinkles.

"You have always been very fond of mathematics, haven't you, Mrs. Torry?" said the minister, in his slow retreat.

"Lor , yes. I can't remember the time when I wa n t crazy to cipher."

" Arithmetic is a very fascinating study, I think," remarked the minister, trying to slide easily off the subject and down the porch steps.

" Tis to me. An there s somethin I was thinkin about this very forenoon seem* all them leaves on the ground made me, I S'pose. It s always been a sight of comfort to me to count. When I was a little girl I d most rather count than play. I used to sit down and count by the hour together. I remember a little pewter porringer I had, that I used to fill up with beans an count em. Well, it come into my head this forenoon what a blessed privilege it would be to count up all the beautiful things in this creation. Just think of countin all them red an gold-coloured leaves, an all the grapes an apples in the

fall ; an when it come to the winter, all the flakes of snow, an the sparkles of frost ; an when it come to the spring, all the flowers, an blades of grass, an the little, new light-green leaves. I don know but you ll think it ain't exactly reverent, but it does seem to me that I d rather do that than sing in the other world. Mebbe some body does have to do the countin ; mebbe it s singin for some."

She stared up into the warm, blue air, in which the bare branches of the trees glistened, with a sweet solemn wonder in her old face.

The minister, in a bewildered way, pondered all the old woman had said, as he rustled down the street. .Later, Mr. Plainfield (the young high-school teacher) and he would have a discussion over it. They often talked over Mrs. Wilson Torry.

After her caller had gone, the old woman entered the house. On the left of the little entry was the best room, where she had been entertaining the minister ; on the right, the kitchen. A young girl was in there eating an apple. She looked up when Mrs. Torry stood in the door.

" He's gone, ain't he ? " said she.

"Why, Letty, when did you come?"

" A few minutes ago, School s just out. I came in the back door, and heard him talking, so I kept still."

" Why didn t you come in and see him? "

"Oh, I didn t want to see him. What you got there, grandma ? "

" Nothin but a sum the minister brought me to do. He an Mr. Plainfield have been workin over it."

" Couldn t they doit?"

" Well, he said they hadn't neither of em done it yet."

"Is it awful hard?"

" I don't know. I ain't looked at it yet."

" Let me see. He didn't get it out of any of our books, I know. We never had any thing like this."

"I S'pose it's one he come across some where. I guess I'll sit down and look at it two or three minutes."

An old bureau stood against the wall ; on it were arranged four religious newspapers in the exact order of their issues, the latest on top, Farmers almanacs for the last four years filed in the same way, and a slate surmounted by an old arithmetic. The pile of newspapers was in the middle ; the slate and almanacs were on either end.

Letty, soberly eating her apple, watched her grandmother getting out the arithmetic and slate. She was a pretty young girl ; her small, innocent face, in spite of its youthful roundness and fairness, reminded people of Mrs. Torry's.

"I don't think much of Mr. Plainfield anyhow," said she, as the click of her grandmother's pencil on the slate began ; * and he knows I don't. He overheard me telling Lizzie Bascom so to-day. He came right up behind us on the street, and I know he heard. You ought to have seen his face. "

" I don't see what you've got against him," remarked Mrs. Torry absently, as she dotted down figures.

" I haven't much of anything that I know of against him, only I don't think he's much of a teacher. He can't do examples as quickly as you, I know, and I don't think a man has any business to be school-teaching if he can't do examples as quickly as an old

lady."

Mrs. Torry stopped her work, and fixed her round unwinking eyes full on the girl's face.

"Letty Torry, there's some things you don't understand. You never will understand 'em, if you live to be as old as Methuselah, as far as that's concerned. But you'll get so you know the things 'air. Sometimes it don't make any difference if anybody's ignorant, an' ain't got any book-learnin'; 'air old, an' had a hard-workin' life. There'll be somethin' in 'em that everybody else ain't got; somethin' that growed, an' didn't have to be learned. I've got this faculty; I can cipher. It ain't nothin' agin Mr. Plainfield if he ain't got it; it's a gift." Her voice took on a solemn tone and trembled.

Letty looked at her with childish wonder. "Well," said she, with a subdued manner, "he has no right to teach, anyhow, without it. I guess I'll have another apple. I was real hungry."

So Letty ate another apple silently, while her grandmother worked at the problem again.

She did not solve it as easily as usual. She worked till midnight, her little lamp drawn close to her on the kitchen table; then she went to bed, with the answer stiff in doubt.

"It ain't goin' to do for me to set up any longer," said she forlornly, as she replaced the slate on the bureau. "I shall be sick if I do. But I declare I don't see what's got into me. I hope I ain't losin' my faculty."

She could not sleep much. The next morning, as soon as their simple breakfast was eaten and Letty had gone to school, she seated herself with her slate and pencil.

When Letty came home at noon she found

her grandmother still at work, and no dinner ready.

"I do declare ! " cried the old woman.
"you'don't mean to say you re home,
Letty ! It ain't twelve o'clock, is it ? "

" Course it is ; quarter past."

" I ain't got one mite of dinner ready,
then. I ve been so took up with the sum I
hadn't no idea how the time was goin' . I
don't know what you will do, child."

" Oh, I'll get some bread and milk, grand
ma ; just as soon have it as anything else.
Got the problem done ? "

" No, I ain't. I feel real bad about your
dinner. I'll kindle up a fire now and fry
you an egg there be time enough."

" I'd rather have bread and milk."

After Letty had gone to school for the
afternoon, and Mrs. Torrey had been working
fruitlessly for an hour longer, she dropped
her pencil.

" I declare," said she, "I'm afraid I am
losin' my faculty ! "

Tears stood in her eyes. " I won't give
up that I am, anyhow," said she, and took
the pencil again.

When Letty returned, in the latter part
of the afternoon, she scarcely knew it, with
the full meaning of the word. She saw her,
but her true consciousness was so full of
figures that Letty's fair face could only look
in at the door.

Letty ran in hastily ; a young girl was
waiting for her outside. " grandma,"
cried Letty, "Lizzie's going to Ellsworth to
do an errand for her mother ; she's coming
back on the last train. can't I go with
her ? "

Her grandmother stared at her for a minute and made no answer.

" She's got tickets for both of us. can't I go, grandma ? "

"Yes."

Letty smoothed her hair a little and put on her best hat ; then she went.

" Good-bye," said she, looking back at the intent old figure ; but she got no answer.

Grandma s so taken up with an example she s got that she doesn t know anything," she told her friend when she was outside. " She didn t answer when I said good-bye ; she forgot to get dinner to-day too."

Mrs. Torry worked on and on. She never looked up nor thought of anything else until it grew so dark that she could not see her figures. "I'll have to light the lamp," said she, with a sigh.

After it was lighted she went to work again. She never thought of wanting any supper, though she had eaten nothing since morning.

The kitchen clock struck seven Letty should have been home then eight, and nine, but she never noticed it. A few minutes afterwards some one knocked on the door. She ciphered on. Then the knocks were repeated, louder and quicker.

"Somebody s knockin , I guess," she muttered, and opened the door. Mr. Plainfield stood there. He was a handsome young man with rosy cheeks ; he was always smiling. He looked past her into the room in quiringly. " Is Letty at home ? " said he.

"Letty?"

" Yes, Letty. Is she at home ? "

Why, yes, she s here. Letty ! "

" Has she gone to bed ? "

"Why, yes, I guess she has." Mrs.
Torry opened the door at the foot of the
stairs. "Letty! Letty!"

"I guess she must be asleep," said she,
turning to the young man, who had stepped
into the kitchen. "Want me to go up an
see ? Did you want anything pertickler ? "

He hesitated. " If you had just as soon
I had something special "

The old lady climbed the steep, uncarpeted
stairs feebly, with a long pat on every step.
She came down faster, reckless of her
trembling uncertainty. "She ain't there!
Letty s gone ! Where is she ? "

"You knew she went to Ellsworth with
Lizzie ? "

"No I didn t."

"Why, she said something to you about
it, didn t she ? "

"I don know whether she did or
not."

"Lizzie just told me that she missed her
in the depot. She left her there for a
minute while she went back for something
she had forgotten. When she came back
she was gone. The train was all ready, and
Lizzie thought she must be on it, so she
got on herself. She did not see her in the
depot here, and has been crying about it,
and afraid to tell till just now. I came
right over as soon as I knew about it. "

"O Letty! Letty! Where s Letty?
Mr. Plainfield, you go an ; find her !
Go right off ! You will, won t you ? Letty
allers liked you."

"I always liked Letty," said the young man brokenly. "I'll find her don't you worry."

"You'll go right off now?"

* Of course I will; I won't wait a minute."

"O Letty, Letty! Where is she? What shall I do? That little bit of a thing and she was always one of the frightened kind out all alone; and it's night! She never went to Ellsworth alone in her hull life. She didn't know nothin' about the town, and she didn't have a cent of money in her pocket."

"I'll send Mrs. Bascom over to stay with you," Mr. Plainfield called back as he hurried off.

Soon Mrs. Bascom came, poking her white, nervous face in the door inquiringly. "She ain't come?"

"No. Mis Bascom, what shall I do?"

"Mis Torry, I do feel so bad about it I don't know what to do. If Lizzie had only told before! but there she was up stairs crying, and afraid to tell. I've been scolding her, but she felt so bad I had to stop. She called me, and told me finally; and I guess twa n't long before Mr. Plainfield started off to find out if she was home. It was lucky he was boarding with us.

He'll find her if anybody can; he's as quick as lightning. He turned white as a sheet when I told him."

"Mis Bascom!"

"Now, don't give up, Mis Torry. He'll find her. She can't be very far off. You'll see her walking in here first thing you know. He's got a real fast team, and

he s started for Ellsworth now. He went past me like a streak when I was coming up the road. He'll have her back safe and sound before morning. "

"O Letty! Letty ! Oh, what shall I do ? It s my own fault, every mite of it e my own fault. Tis ; you don't know nothin about it. The minister brought me a sum, he an Mr. Plainfield had been workin on, to do, yesterday afternoon, an I jest sat and ciphered half the night, an all day. I didn t know no more what Letty asked me, when she came in from school, than nothin at all. I didn t more n half know when she come. I didn t know nothin but them figgers, an now Letty s lost, an it s my fault."

"Why, you might have let her gone if you'd known."

" I guess I shouldn t let her gone all alone with your Lizzie, to come home after dark in the last train, little delicate thing as she was. I guess I shouldn t ; an I guess I should have started up an done something, if I d known, when she wasn t here at train time. I didn t get the sum done, an I m glad of it ; it seems to me jest as if I was iosin my faculty as I m growin older, an I hope I am."

"Now, don't talk so, Mis Torry. Sit down an try to be calm. You'll be sick."

" I guess there ain't much bein calm. I tell you what tis, Mis Bascom, I ve been a wicked woman. I Ve been thinkin so much of this faculty I ve had for cipherin that I ve set it afore everything I hev. Only yesterday that poor child didn t hev any dinner but crackers an milk, cause I was so took up with the sum that I forgot it. An she was jest as patient as a lamb about it ; said she d rather hev crackers an milk than anything else. Oh, dear ! dear !"

"Don't cry, Mis Torry."

" I can't help it. It don't make no difference what folks are born with a faculty for whether it s cipherin , or singin , or writin poetry the love that s betwixt human beings an the help that s betwixt em ought to come first. I ve known it all the time, but I ve gone agin it, an now I ve got my pay. What shall I do ? "

Mrs. Bascom remained with her all night, but she could not pacify her in the least. She was nearly distracted herself. She was fearful that her Lizzie might be blamed.

The next day people flocked to the house to inquire if there were any news from Letty, and to comfort her grandmother. Sympathy seemed fairly dripping like fragrant oil from these simple, honest hearts ; but the poor old woman got no refreshing influence from it. She kept on her old strain in their ears. She had lost Letty, and it was all her own fault, and what should she do ? Mr. Plainfield did not come home. The minister took his place in school. Nothing was heard until noon ; then a telegram from the teacher came. He thought he was on Letty s track, he said ; they should hear again.

Next day there was a second message : Letty was safe ; coming home as soon as possible. The following day passed then, and not another word came. The old grandmother s faith and hope seemed to have deserted her. She knew Letty was not found ; she never would be found. She and Mr. Plainfield were both lost now.

Something dreadful had happened to both of them.

"The worst of it is," she told Mrs. Bascom one afternoon, with a fierce indignation at herself, " I can't help thinkin about that awful sum now after all that s happened. Them figgers keep troopin into my head

right in the midst of my thinkin about Letty. It s all I can do to let that slate alone, an not take it off the bureau. But I won t I won t if it kills me not to. An all the time I jest despise myself for it : a-lettin my faculty for cipherin get ahead of things that s higher an sacreder. I do think I Ve lost my faculty now, an I most hope I hev. But it won t make no differ ence bout Letty now. Oh dear l dear ! What shall I do ? "

On the fourth day after Letty s disappear ance, between six and seven o clock in the evening, Mrs. Torry was sitting alone in her kitchen. The last sympathiser had gone home to eat her supper.

The distressed old woman had drunk a cup of tea ; that was all she would touch. The pot was still on the stove. There was a soft yellow light from the lamp over the room. The warm air was full of the fragrance of boiling tea.

Mrs. Torry sat looking over at the bureau. She would have looked the same way if she had been starving and seen food there.

" Oh," she whispered, " if I could only work on that sum a little whrle, it does seem as if twould comfort me more n anything.

Lord ! I wonder if I was to blame ? Twas the way I was made, an I couldn t help that. P rhaps I should hev let Letty gone, an she d been lost, anyway. I wonder if I hev lost my faculty ? "

She sat there looking over at the slate. At last she rose and started to cross the room. Midway she stopped.

" Oh, what am I doin ? Letty s lost, an

"I'm goin to cipherin ! S'pose she should come in an ketch me? She d be so hurt she d never get over it. She wouldn t think I cared anything about her."

She stood looking at the slate and thinking for a moment. Then her face settled into a hard calm.

"Letty won't come back she won't ne^eer come back. I might as well cipher as anything else."

She went across the room, got the slate and pencil, and returned to her seat. She had been ciphering for a minute or so when a sound outside caused her to start and stop.

She sat with mouth open and chin trembling, listening. The sound came nearer ; it was at the door. Of all the sweet sounds which had smote that old woman's ears since her birth songs of birds, choral hymns, Sabbath bells there had been none so sweet as this. It was Letty's thin, girlish treble just outside the door which she heard.

For a second as she sat listening, her face was rapt, angelic ; in spite of its sallowness and wrinkles it might have figured in an altar-piece. Then it changed. The slate was in her lap. What would Letty think ?

It was all passing swiftly ; the door-latch rattled; she slipped the slate under her gingham apron, and sat still.

"O poor grandma ! " cried Letty, running in ; " you've been frightened most to death about me, haven't you ? " She bent over her grandmother and laid her soft, pretty cheek against hers.

"O Letty ! I didn't think you'd ever come back."

"I have ; but I did have the dreadfulest time. I got carried way out West on an express train. Just think of it ! I got on the wrong train while I was waiting for Lizzie. I was frightened almost to death. But Mr. Plainfield telegraphed ahead. He found out where I was going, and they took

me to an hotel ; and then he came for me.
You haven't said anything to Mr. Plainfield,
grandma."

The young man was standing smiling
behind Letty. She looked astonished when
her grandmother did not rise to speak to
him, but sat perfectly still as she uttered
some broken thanks.

" Why, grandma, you ain't sick, are you? "
said she.

" No I ain't sick," said her grandmother,
with a meek tone.

When Mr. Plainfield left, in a few mo-
ments, Letty gave a half-defiant, half-
ashamed glance at her grandmother, and
followed him out, closing the door.

When she returned Mrs. Torry was stand-
ing by the table pouring out a cup of tea for
her. The slate was in its usual place on the
bureau.

" Grandma," said Letty, blushing inno-
cently, * I thought I ought to say something
to Mr. Plainfield, you know. I hadn't, and I
knew he heard what I said to Lizzie that day.
I thought I ought to ask his pardon, when
he had done so much for me. I've made up
my mind that I do like him. There's other
things besides doing arithmetic examples."

" I guess there is, child. Them things is
all second. I think I'd rather have a man
who hadn't got any special faculty, if I was
going to get married. "

" Nobody said anything about getting
married, grandma."

Pretty soon Letty went to bed. She was
worn out with her adventures.

" ain't you going too, grandma ? " asked
she, turning around, lamp in hand, at the
foot of the stairs.

" Pretty soon, child ; pretty soon. I ve got a little somethin I want to do first."

The grandmother sat up till nearly morning working over the problem. Once in a while she would lay down her slate and climb upstairs and peep into Letty s little peaceful girl-chamber to see if she were safe.

" If I have got that dear child safe, an ain't lost my faculty, it s more n I deserve, muttered she, as she took her slate the last time.

The next evening the minister came over. "So, Letty s come," he said, when Mrs. Torry opened the door.

" Yes, Letty s come, and I ve got that sum you gave me done."

WEDDING DAY,

By Winston Marks

Some folks say a good wife is a composite of many things. And sometimes a girl finds it tough. But with the ratio of the sexes drastically changed....

[Transcriber's Note: This Project Gutenberg etext was produced from Worlds of If Science Fiction, January 1955.

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At breakfast Polly and June had an argument over the coffee. Polly had brewed it. June thought it was too strong. Doris and Sue stayed out of the argument at first.

Polly defended, "Sure, it's a little stronger, but men like it strong. You might as well get used to it."

June said, "See here, he's got to make some concessions. After all, why should four of us suffer--"

"Suffer? You call being married to Hollis Jamison suffering?"

"Don't be so impressed. He's not doing badly marrying us, either. He could do a lot worse."

"Why, you vain witch! Just because you play a fair game of chess--"

"Oh, I'm not taking all the credit. You're a fine cook, Doris is witty and Sue's body would make any man's mouth water--but that's just the point! Look what he's getting! Why should we have to change all our habits and tastes to conform with his?"

Now Doris entered the argument. "You know darn well why! It's still a man's world and a man's choice. Back when there was a man for practically every woman, it was different. But it's five women to one man right now--don't ever forget that--five to one, and so far the law only requires a quadracell. Just be grateful you aren't the one who's left out. You and your chess-playing! How far would you get attracting a man, all by yourself?"

"Shhh, now, all of you," Sue broke into the telepathic conversation. "Let's clear the dishes and get the apartment straightened up. Hollis did make one concession--moving in with us, instead of making us live in that dismal bachelor's hole of his. Let's not make him regret it."

They heeded Sue and got busy. Sue was the arbiter. She ruled the quartet with a gentle but confident mind. All four knew that her lithe, athletic body with its soft curves and golden hair was the greatest asset in this transaction of matrimony.

There had been no dissension on this point, nor could there have been. The bureau would never have allowed them to be together and form a marriage cell had there been the slightest dispute.

Many differences of opinion were allowable, but the four had been carefully screened in certain matters of basic tastes. They liked the same colors, foods, styles of clothing, video programs, sports and vacation activities. All were carefully schooled ambiverts of roughly equal education. Instead of conflicting, their differences of skills, talents and personality traits complemented each other.

Even with all this care in selecting and matching, however, the big test was the culmination of the marriage, itself--the whole purpose of this banding together. The unpredictable quality of the most stable feminine emotions made the choice of a mate most difficult of all.

This awareness was in all their minds this day, and it made them a little nervous. Even the argument that had started over the coffee had been faintly alarming to Sue. They were a team, welded together by the wonderful gift of telepathy, which was only possible through formation of a marriage cell. The most complete intimacy of thought and feeling had been nurtured for a whole year before marriage was permissible. Sympathy, tolerance and sharing a common experience with mutual enjoyment and happiness was the keystone of the polygamous unions. Nothing must spoil it now.

The delivery vault thumped, and the signal light flicked on. Sue rushed to slide up the door.

"Orchids!" they chorused mentally, and Sue noticed with satisfaction that June's thought was as strong as the others. The lovely flowers were put in the cooler, the apartment was tidied and they turned to the exciting task of becoming beautiful for their handsome husband.

The tiff over the coffee was forgotten as they became immersed in sprays, powders, tints, cosmetics, body ornaments and the precious nuptial perfume. This latter, issued to them only yesterday when they signed the register and received the license, was now as traditionally exclusive to weddings as trousseaus had been centuries ago.

Feminine clothing, of course, had long since been eliminated from the occasion, along with other redundancies such as waggish and mischievous guests, old shoes, rice and hectic honeymoon trips.

The official and religious arrangements had been completed yesterday at the registry and the chapel, the union to become legal and effective at noon on this day. When Hollis Jamison walked through their door at twelve o'clock he would bring four gold rings, and the moment the rings were placed on the proper fingers the ceremony was complete.

Doris said, "Let's steal just a tiny whiff of the perfume. I'm too curious to wait."

June and Polly were game, but Sue cut them off. "Not on your life! I used to know a chemist at the hormone labs where they compound this stuff, and he told me about it. We have things to do, and if what he told me is true--well, it's very distracting."

Polly backed her up, "I hear it is terribly volatile. I guess we wouldn't want it to wear off before Hollis came."

"Hollis!" The thought was June's, and it came thin and quavery. "What--do you suppose it's like to be married?"

No one answered, for there was no experience among them. Each had her own romantic idea, so cherished, so private that even within the intimacy of their clique it was too sacred to discuss.

Suddenly June said, "I'm scared."

The thought had come sharply and unexpectedly. It was contagious. Polly said, "Me, too."

"Of what?" Doris asked, "Of drinking strong coffee the rest of your lives?"

It was a weak, nervous stab at humor, and Sue knew that Doris was as jumpy as the rest of them. "Steady, gals," she said sympathetically. "It'll be worth it. We want a baby, don't we?"

It was the right thought at the right time. Sue felt their minds relax, and the thought even did her some good. A sweet, little, round, pink baby--

She let the mental picture flow out to the others, and the little crisis passed.

The minutes flew, and soon it was five minutes to twelve. "Have we forgotten anything?" Sue asked.

"The perfume!" Polly and June said together.

"Hurry!" Doris said. "I think he's coming."

The seal on the tiny vial was broken, one drop on each breast, and the rich, exotic fumes exuded a gentle, warm excitement that was entirely different from the innocent scents they had known.

The door was unlocked, and now it opened.

Hollis stepped in, bronzed body bared to the waist.

"The flowers!" Polly wailed inwardly. "We forgot the orchids--"

But Hollis Jamison didn't notice the discrepancy. He advanced smiling from his gray eyes and strong mouth. Sue opened her lips and her fine, white teeth showed a welcoming smile. She was proud of her lovely body, and June, Polly and Doris shared in that pride.

Sue held out her left hand with fingers outstretched. Her man came forward jingling the four rings in his right hand. He paused before her, drew her left hand to his lips, kissed the little finger and slid the proper ring on it, then, in order he kissed Sue's other three fingers and banded them with the remaining rings, symbolic of the four separate feminine entities who dwelt in this one magnificent body.

And with each ring he said a name: "June, Polly, Doris, Sue--"

He straightened and gazed into the two blue eyes.

"I thee wed," he said simply.

BROTHER HUTCHINS

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *More Cargoes*, by W. W. Jacobs
1897

“I’ve got a friend coming down with us this trip, George,” said the master of the _Wave_ as they sat on deck after tea watching the river. “One of our new members, Brother Hutchins.”

“From the Mission, I s’pose?” said the mate coldly.

“From the Mission,” confirmed the skipper. “You’ll like him, George; he’s been one o’ the greatest rascals that ever breathed.”

“Well, I don’t know what you mean,” said the mate, looking up indignantly.

“He’s ‘ad a most interestin’ life,” said the skipper; “he’s been in half the jails of England. To hear ‘im talk is as good as reading a book, And ‘e’s as merry as they make ‘em.”

“Oh, and is ‘e going to give us prayers afore breakfast like that fat-necked, white-faced old rascal what came down with us last summer and stole my boots?” demanded the mate.

“He never stole ‘em, George,” said the skipper.

“If yo’d ‘eard that man cry when I mentioned to ‘im your unjust suspicions, you’d never have forgiven yourself. He told ‘em at the meetin’, an’ they had prayers for you.”

“You an’ your Mission are a pack o’ fools,” said the mate scornfully. “You’re always being done. A man comes to you an’ ses ‘e’s found grace, and you find ‘im a nice, easy, comfortable living. ‘E sports a bit of blue ribbon and a red nose at the same time. Don’t tell me. You ask me why I don’t join you, and I tell you it’s because I don’t want to lose my common sense.”

“You’ll know better one o’ these days, George,” said the skipper, rising. “I earnestly hope you’ll ‘ave some great sorrow or affliction, something almost too great for you to bear. It’s the only thing that’ll save you.”

“I expect that fat chap what stole my boots would like to see it too,” said the mate.

“He would,” said the skipper solemnly. “He said so.”

The mate got up, fuming and knocking his pipe out with great violence against the side of the schooner, stamped up and down the deck two or three times, and then, despairing of regaining his accustomed calm on board, went ashore.

It was late when he returned. A light burnt in the cabin, and the skipper with his spectacles on was reading aloud from an old number of the _Evangelical Magazine_ to a thin, white-faced man dressed in black.

“That's my mate,” said the skipper, looking up from his book.

“Is he one of our band?” inquired the stranger.

The skipper shook his head despondently.

“Not yet,” said the stranger encouragingly.

“Seen too many of 'em,” said the mate bluntly. “The more I see of 'em, the less I like 'em. It makes me feel wicked to look at 'em.”

“Ah, that ain't you speaking now, it's the Evil One,” said Mr. Hutchins confidently.

“I s'pose you know 'im pretty well,” said the mate simply.

“I lived with him thirty years,” said Mr. Hutchins solemnly, “then I got tired of him.”

“I should think he got a bit sick too,” said the mate. “Thirty days 'ud ha' been too long for me.”

He went to his berth to give Mr. Hutchins time to frame a suitable reply and returned with a full bottle of whisky and a tumbler, and having drawn the cork with a refreshing pop, mixed himself a stiff glass and lit his pipe. Mr. Hutchins with a deep groan gazed reproachfully at the skipper and shook his head at the bottle.

“You know I don't like you to bring that filthy stuff in the cabin, George,” said the skipper.

“It's not for me,” said the mate flippantly. “It's for the Evil One. He ses the sight of his old pal 'Utchins 'as turned his stomach.”

He glanced at the stranger and saw to his astonishment that he appeared to be struggling with a strong desire to laugh. His lips tightened and his shifty little eyes watered, but he conquered himself in a moment, and rising to his feet delivered a striking address--in favor of teetotalism. He condemned whisky as not only wicked, but unnecessary, declaring with a side glance at the mate that two acidulated drops

dissolved in water were an excellent substitute.

The sight of the whisky appeared to madden him, and the skipper sat spell-bound at his eloquence, until at length, after apostrophising the bottle in a sentence which left him breathless, he snatched it up and dashed it to pieces on the floor.

For a moment the mate was struck dumb with fury, then with a roar he leaped up and rushed for the lecturer, but the table was between them, and before he could get over it the skipper sprang up and seizing him by the arm, pushed him into the state-room.

“Lea' go,” foamed the mate. “Let me get at him.”

“George,” said the skipper, still striving with him, “I'm ashamed of you.”

“Ashamed, be damned,” yelled the mate struggling. “What did he chuck my whisky away for?”

“He's a saint,” said the skipper, relaxing his hold as he heard Mr. Hutchins lock himself in. “He's a saint, George. Seein' 'is beautiful words 'ad no effect on you, he 'ad recourse to strong measures.”

“Wait till I get hold of 'im,” said the mate menacingly. “Only wait, I'll saint 'im.”

“Is he better, dear friend?” came the voice of Mr. Hutchins from beyond the door, “because I forgot the tumbler.”

“Come out,” roared the mate, “come out and upset it.”

Mr. Hutchins declined the invitation, but from behind the door pleaded tearfully with the mate to lead a better life, and even rebuked the skipper for allowing the bottle of sin to be produced in the cabin. The skipper took the rebuke humbly, and after requesting Mr. Hutchins to sleep in the state-room that night in order to frustrate the evident designs of the mate, went on deck for a final look round and then came below and turned in himself.

The crew of the schooner were early astir next morning getting under way, but Mr. Hutchins kept his bed, although the mate slipped down to the cabin several times and tapped at his door. When he did come up the mate was at the wheel and the men down below getting breakfast.

“Sleep well?” inquired Mr. Hutchins softly, as he took a seat on the hatches, a little distance from him.

“I'll let you know when I haven't got this wheel,” said the mate sourly.

“Do,” said Mr. Hutchins genially. “We shall see you at our meeting to-night?” he asked blandly.

The mate disdained to reply, but his wrath when at Mr. Hutchins' request the cabin was invaded by the crew that evening, cannot be put into words.

For three nights they had what Mr. Hutchins described as love-feasts, and the mate as blamed bear-gardens. The crew were not particularly partial to hymns, considered as such, but hymns shouted out with the full force of their lungs while sharing the skipper's hymn book appealed to them strongly. Besides, it maddened the mate, and to know that they were defying their superior, and at the same time doing good to their own souls, was very sweet. The boy, whose voice was just breaking, got off some surprising effects, and seemed to compass about five octaves without distress.

When they were exhausted with singing Mr. Hutchins would give them a short address, generally choosing as his subject a strong, violent-tempered man given to drink and coarse language. The speaker proved conclusively that a man who drank would do other things in secret, and he pictured this man going home and beating his wife because she reproached him for breaking open the children's money-box to spend the savings on Irish whisky. At every point he made he groaned, and the crew, as soon as they found they might groan too, did so with extraordinary gusto, the boy's groans being weird beyond conception.

They reached Plymouth where they had to put out a few cases of goods, just in time to save the mate's reason, for the whole ship, owing to Mr. Hutchins' zeal was topsy turvy. The ship's cat sat up all one night cursing him and a blue ribbon he had tied round her neck, and even the battered old tea-pot came down to meals bedizened with bows of the same proselytising hue.

By the time they had got to their moorings it was too late to take the hatches off, and the crew sat gazing longingly at the lights ashore. Their delight when the visitor obtained permission for them to go ashore with him for a little stroll was unbounded, and they set off like schoolboys.

“They couldn't be with a better man,” said the skipper, as the party moved off; “when I think of the good that man's done in under four days it makes me ashamed of myself.”

“You had better ship 'im as mate,” said George. “There'd be a pair of you then.”

“There's greater work for 'im to do,” said the skipper solemnly.

He saw the mate's face in the waning light and moved off with a sigh. The mate, for his part, leaned against the side smoking, and as the skipper declined to talk on any subject but Mr. Hutchins, relapsed into a moody silence until the return of the crew some two hours later.

“Mr. Hutchins is coming on after, sir,” said the boy. “He told us to say he was paying a visit to a friend.”

“What's the name of the pub?” asked the mate quietly.

“If you can't speak without showing your nasty temper, George, you'd better hold your tongue,” said the skipper severely. “What's your opinion about Mr. Hutchins, my lads?”

“A more open 'arted man never breathed,” said Dan, the oldest of the crew, warmly.

“Best feller I ever met in my life,” said another.

“You hear that?” said the skipper.

“I hear,” said the mate.

“E's a Christian,” said the boy. “I never knew what a Christian was before I met 'im. What do you think 'e give us.”

“Give you?” said the skipper.

“A pound cash,” said the boy. “A golden sovring each. Tork about Christians! I wish I knew a few more of 'em.”

“Well I never!” exclaimed the gratified skipper.

“An' the way 'e did it was so nice,” said the oldest seamen. “'E ses, 'that's from me an' the skipper,' 'e ses. 'Thank the skipper for it as much as me,' 'e ses.”

“Well now, don't waste it,” said the skipper.

“I should bank it if I was you. It'll make a nice little nest-egg.”

“I 'ope it was come by honest, that's all,” said the mate.

“O' course it was,” cried the skipper. “You've got a 'ard, cruel 'art, George. P'raps if it 'ad been a little softer you'd 'ave 'ad one too.”

“Blast 'is sovrings,” said the surly mate. “I'd like to know where he got 'em from, an' wot 'e means by saying it come from you as much as

'im. I never knew _you_ to give money away.”

“I s'pose,” said the skipper very softly, “he means that I put such like thought s into 'is 'art. Well, you'd better turn in, my lads. We start work at four.”

The hands went forward, and the skipper and mate descended to the cabin and prepared for sleep. The skipper set a lamp on the table ready for Mr. Hutchins when he should return, and after a short inward struggle bade the mate “good-night,” and in a couple of minutes was fast asleep.

At four o'clock the mate woke suddenly to find the skipper standing by his berth. The lamp still stood burning on the table, fighting feebly against the daylight which was pouring in through the skylight.

“Not turned up yet?” said the mate, with a glance at the visitor's empty berth.

The skipper shook his head spiritlessly and pointed to the table. The mate following his finger, saw a small canvas bag, and by the side of it fourpence halfpenny in coppers and an unknown amount in brace buttons.

“There was twenty-three pounds freight money in that bag when we left London,” said the skipper, finding his voice at last.

“Well, what do you think's become of it?” inquired the mate, taking up the lamp and blowing it out.

“I can't think,” said the skipper, “my'ed's all confused. Bro--Mr. Hutchins ain't come back yet.”

“I s'pose he was late and didn't like to disturb you,” said the mate without moving a muscle, “but I've no doubt 'e's all right. Don't you worry about him.”

“It's very strange where it's gone, George,” faltered the skipper, “very strange.”

“Well, 'Utchins is a generous sort o' chap,” said the mate, “'e give the men five pounds for nothing, so perhaps he'll give you something--when 'e comes back.”

“Go an' ask the crew to come down here,” said the skipper, sinking on a locker and gazing at the brazen collection before him.

The mate obeyed, and a few minutes afterwards returned with the men, who swarming into the cabin, listened sympathetically as the skipper related his loss.

“It's a mystery which nobody can understand, sir,” said old Dan when he had finished, “and it's no use tryin'.”

“One o' them things what won't never be cleared up properly,” said the cook comfortably.

“Well, I don't like to say it,” said the skipper, “but I must. The only man who could have taken it was Hutchins.”

“Wot, sir,” said Dan, “that blessed man! Why, I'd laugh at the idea.”

“He couldn't do it,” said the boy, “not if he tried he couldn't. He was too good.”

“He's taken that twenty-three poun',” said the skipper deliberately; “eighteen, we'll call it, because I'm goin' to have five of it back.”

“You're labourin' under a great mistake, sir,” said Dan ambiguously.

“Are you going to give me that money?” said the skipper loudly.

“Beggin' your pardon, sir, no,” said the cook, speaking for the rest as he put his foot on the companion-ladder. “Brother 'Utchins gave us that money for singing them 'ims so well. 'E said so, and we ain't 'ad no call to think as it warn't honestly come by. Nothing could ever make us think that, would it, mates?”

“Nothing,” said the others with exemplary firmness. “It couldn't be done.”

They followed the cook up on deck, and leaning over the side, gazed in a yearning fashion toward the place where they had last seen their benefactor. Then, with a sorrowful presentiment that they could never look upon his like again, they turned away and prepared for the labours of the day.

TURKEY RED

By Frances Gilchrist Wood

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The old mail-sled running between Haney and Le Beau, in the days when Dakota was still a Territory, was nearing the end of its hundred-mile route.

It was a desolate country in those days: geographers still described it as The Great American Desert, and in looks it certainly deserved the title. Never was there anything as lonesome as that endless stretch of snow reaching across the world until it cut into a cold gray sky, excepting the same desert burned to a brown tinder by the hot wind of Summer.

Nothing but sky and plain and its voice, the wind, unless you might count a lonely sod shack blocked against the horizon, miles away from a neighbor, miles from anywhere, its red-curtained square of window glowing through the early twilight.

There were three men in the sled; Dan, the mail-carrier, crusty, belligerently Western, the self-elected guardian of every one on his route; Hillas, a younger man, hardly more than a boy, living on his pre-emption claim near the upper reaches of the stage line; the third a stranger from that part of the country vaguely defined as "the East." He was traveling, had given his name as Smith, and was as inquisitive about the country as he was reticent about his business there. Dan plainly disapproved of him.

They had driven the last cold miles in silence when the stage-driver turned to his neighbor. "Letter didn't say anything about coming out in the Spring to look over the country, did it?"

Hillas shook his head. "It was like all the rest, Dan. Don't want to build a railroad at all until the country's settled."

"God! Can't they see the other side of it? What it means to the folks already here to wait for it?"

The stranger thrust a suddenly interested profile above the handsome collar of his fur coat. He looked out over the waste of snow.

"You say there's no timber here?"

Dan maintained unfriendly silence and Hillas answered. "Nothing but scrub on the banks of the creeks. Years of prairie fires have burned out

the trees, we think."

"Any ores--mines?"

The boy shook his head as he slid farther down in his worn buffalo coat of the plains.

"We're too busy rustling for something to eat first. And you can't develop mines without tools."

"Tools?"

"Yes, a railroad first of all."

Dan shifted the lines from one fur-mittened hand to the other, swinging the freed numbed arm in rhythmic beating against his body as he looked along the horizon a bit anxiously. The stranger shivered visibly.

"It's a god-forsaken country. Why don't you get out?"

Hillas, following Dan's glance around the blurred sky-line, answered absently, "Usual answer is, 'Leave? It's all I can do to stay here.'"

Smith regarded him irritably. "Why should any sane man ever have chosen this frozen wilderness?"

Hillas closed his eyes wearily. "We came in the Spring."

"I see!" The edged voice snapped, "Visionaries!"

Hillas's eyes opened again, wide, and then the boy was looking beyond the man with the far-seeing eyes of the plainsman. He spoke under his breath as if he were alone.

"Visionary, pioneer, American. That was the evolution in the beginning. Perhaps that is what we are." Suddenly the endurance in his voice went down before a wave of bitterness. "The first pioneers had to wait, too. How could they stand it so long!"

The young shoulders drooped as he thrust stiff fingers deep within the shapeless coat pockets. He slowly withdrew his right hand holding a parcel wrapped in brown paper. He tore a three-cornered flap in the cover, looked at the brightly colored contents, replaced the flap and returned the parcel, his chin a little higher.

Dan watched the northern sky-line restlessly. "It won't be snow. Look like a blizzard to you, Hillas?"

The traveler sat up. "Blizzard?"

"Yes," Dan drawled in willing contribution to his uneasiness, "the real Dakota article where blizzards are made. None of your eastern imitations, but a ninety-mile wind that whets slivers of ice off the frozen drifts all the way down from the North Pole. Only one good thing about a blizzard--it's over in a hurry. You get to shelter or you freeze to death."

A gust of wind flung a powder of snow stingingly against their faces. The traveler withdrew his head turtlewise within the handsome collar in final condemnation. "No man in his senses would ever have deliberately come here to live."

Dan turned. "Wouldn't, eh?"

"No."

"You're American?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I was born here. It's my country."

"Ever read about your Pilgrim Fathers?"

"Why, of course."

"Frontiersmen, same as us. You're living on what they did. We're getting this frontier ready for those who come after. Want our children to have a better chance than we had. Our reason's same as theirs. Hillas told you the truth. Country's all right if we had a railroad."

"Humph!" With a contemptuous look across the desert. "Where's your freight, your grain, cattle----"

"_West_-bound freight, coal, feed, seed-grain, work, and more neighbors."

"One-sided bargain. Road that hauls empties one way doesn't pay. No Company would risk a line through here."

The angles of Dan's jaw showed white. "Maybe. Ever get a chance to pay your debt to those Pilgrim pioneers? Ever take it? Think the stock was worth saving?"

He lifted his whip-handle toward a pin-point of light across the stretch of snow. "Donovan lives over there and Mis' Donovan. We call them 'old

folks' now; their hair has turned white as these drifts in two years. All they've got is here. He's a real farmer and a lot of help to the country, but they won't last long like this."

Dan swung his arm toward a glimmer nor' by nor'east. "Mis' Clark lives there, a mile back from the stage road. Clark's down in Yankton earning money to keep them going. She's alone with her baby holding down the claim." Dan's arm sagged. "We've had women go crazy out here."

The whip-stock followed the empty horizon half round the compass to a lighted red square not more than two miles away. "Mis' Carson died in the Spring. Carson stayed until he was too poor to get away. There's three children--oldest's Katy, just eleven." Dan's words failed, but his eyes told. "Somebody will brag of them as ancestors some day. They'll deserve it if they live through this."

Dan's jaw squared as he leveled his whip-handle straight at the traveler. "I've answered your questions, now you answer mine! We know your opinion of the country--you're not traveling for pleasure or your health. What are you here for?"

"Business. My own!"

"There's two kinds of business out here this time of year. 'Tain't healthy for either of them." Dan's words were measured and clipped. "You've damned the West and all that's in it good and plenty. Now I say, damn the people anywhere in the whole country that won't pay their debts from pioneer to pioneer; that lets us fight the wilderness barehanded and die fighting; that won't risk----"

A gray film dropped down over the world, a leaden shroud that was not the coming of twilight. Dan jerked about, his whip cracked out over the heads of the leaders and they broke into a quick trot. The shriek of the runners along the frozen snow cut through the ominous darkness.

"Hillas," Dan's voice came sharply, "stand up and look for the light on Clark's guide-pole about a mile to the right. God help us if it ain't burning."

Hillas struggled up, one clumsy mitten thatching his eyes from the blinding needles. "I don't see it, Dan. We can't be more than a mile away. Hadn't you better break toward it?"

"Got to keep the track 'til we--see--light!"

The wind tore the words from his mouth as it struck them in lashing fury. The leaders had disappeared in a wall of snow but Dan's lash whistled forward in reminding authority. There was a moment's lull.

"See it, Hillas?"

"No, Dan."

Tiger-like the storm leaped again, bandying them about in its paws like captive mice. The horses swerved before the punishing blows, bunched, backed, tangled. Dan stood up shouting his orders of menacing appeal above the storm.

Again a breathing space before the next deadly impact. As it came Hillas shouted, "I see it--there, Dan! It's a red light. She's in trouble."

Through the whirling smother and chaos of Dan's cries and the struggling horses the sled lunged out of the road into unbroken drifts. Again the leaders swung sidewise before the lashing of a thousand lariats of ice and bunched against the wheel-horses. Dan swore, prayed, mastered them with far-reaching lash, then the off leader went down. Dan felt behind him for Hillas and shoved the reins against his arm.

"I'll get him up--or cut leaders--loose! If I don't--come back--drive to light. _Don't--get--out!_"

Dan disappeared in the white fury. There were sounds of a struggle; the sled jerked sharply and stood still. Slowly it strained forward.

Hillas was standing, one foot outside on the runner, as they traveled a team's length ahead. He gave a cry--"Dan! Dan!" and gripped a furry bulk that lumbered up out of the drift.

"All--right--son." Dan reached for the reins.

Frantically they fought their slow way toward the blurred light, staggering on in a fight with the odds too savage to last. They stopped abruptly as the winded leaders leaned against a wall interposed between themselves and insatiable fury.

Dan stepped over the dashboard, groped his way along the tongue between the wheel-horses and reached the leeway of a shadowy square. "It's the shed, Hillas. Help get the team in." The exhausted animals crowded into the narrow space without protest.

"Find the guide-rope to the house, Dan?"

"On the other side, toward the shack. Where's--Smith?"

"Here, by the shed."

Dan turned toward the stranger's voice.

"We're going 'round to the blizzard-line tied from shed to shack. Take hold of it and don't let go. If you do you'll freeze before we can find you. When the wind comes, turn your back and wait. Go on when it dies down and never let go the rope. Ready? The wind's dropped. Here, Hillas, next to me."

Three blurs hugged the sod walls around to the north-east corner. The forward shadow reached upward to a swaying rope, lifted the hand of the second who guided the third.

"Hang on to my belt, too, Hillas. Ready--Smith? Got the rope?"

They crawled forward, three barely visible figures, six, eight, ten steps. With a shriek the wind tore at them, beat the breath from their bodies, cut them with stinging needle-points and threw them aside. Dan reached back to make sure of Hillas who fumbled through the darkness for the stranger.

Slowly they struggled ahead, the cold growing more intense; two steps, four, and the mounting fury of the blizzard reached its zenith. The blurs swayed like battered leaves on a vine that the wind tore in two at last and flung the living beings wide. Dan, slinging to the broken rope, rolled over and found Hillas with the frayed end of the line in his hand, reaching about through the black drifts for the stranger. Dan crept closer, his mouth at Hillas's ear, shouting, "Quick! Right behind me if we're to live through it!"

The next moment Hillas let go the rope. Dan reached madly. "Boy, you can't find him--it'll only be two instead of one! Hillas! Hillas!"

The storm screamed louder than the plainsman and began heaping the snow over three obstructions in its path, two that groped slowly and one that lay still. Dan fumbled at his belt, unfastened it, slipped the rope through the buckle, knotted it and crept its full length back toward the boy. A snow-covered something moved forward guiding another, one arm groping in blind search, reached and touched the man clinging to the belt.

Beaten and buffeted by the ceaseless fury that no longer gave quarter, they slowly fought their way hand-over-hand along the rope, Dan now crawling last. After a frozen eternity they reached the end of the line fastened man-high against a second haven of wall. Hillas pushed open the unlocked door, the three men staggered in and fell panting against the side of the room.

The stage-driver recovered first, pulled off his mittens, examined his fingers and felt quickly of nose, ears, and chin. He looked sharply at Hillas and nodded. Unceremoniously they stripped off the stranger's gloves; reached for a pan, opened the door, dipped it into the drift and

plunged Smith's fingers down in the snow.

"Your nose is white, too. Thaw it out."

Abruptly Dan indicated a bench against the wall where the two men seated would take up less space.

"I'm----" The stranger's voice was unsteady. "I----," but Dan had turned his back and his attention to the homesteader.

The eight by ten room constituted the entire home. A shed roof slanted from eight feet high on the door and window side to a bit more than five on the other. A bed in one corner took up most of the space, and the remaining necessities were bestowed with the compactness of a ship's cabin. The rough boards of the roof and walls had been hidden by a covering of newspapers, with a row of illustrations pasted picture height. Cushions and curtains of turkey-red calico brightened the homely shack.

The driver had slipped off his buffalo coat and was bending over a baby exhaustedly fighting for breath that whistled shrilly through a closing throat. The mother, scarcely more than a girl, held her in tensely extended arms.

"How long's she been this way?"

"She began to choke up day before yesterday, just after you passed on the down trip."

The driver laid big finger tips on the restless wrist.

"She always has the croup when she cuts a tooth, Dan, but this is different. I've used all the medicines I have--nothing relieves the choking."

The girl lifted heavy eyelids above blue semicircles of fatigue and the compelling terror back of her eyes forced a question through dry lips.

"Dan, do you know what membranous croup is like? Is this it?"

The stage-driver picked up the lamp and held it close to the child's face, bringing out with distressing clearness the blue-veined pallor, sunken eyes, and effort of impeded breathing. He frowned, putting the lamp back quickly.

"Mebbe it is, Mis' Clark, but don't you be scared. We'll help you a spell."

Dan lifted the red curtain from the cupboard, found an emptied

lard-pail, half filled it with water and placed it on an oil-stove that stood in the center of the room. He looked questioningly about the four walls, discovered a cleverly contrived tool-box beneath the cupboard shelves sorted out a pair of pincers and bits of iron, laying the latter in a row over the oil blaze. He took down a can of condensed milk, poured a spoonful of the thick stuff into a cup of water and made room for it near the bits of heating iron.

He turned to the girl, opened his lips as if to speak with a face full of pity.

Along the four-foot space between the end of the bed and the opposite wall the girl walked, crooning to the sick child she carried. As they watched, the low song died away, her shoulder rubbed heavily against the boarding, her eyelids dropped and she stood sound asleep. The next hard-drawn breath of the baby roused her and she stumbled on, crooning a lullaby.

Smith clutched the younger man's shoulder. "God, Hillas, look where she's marked the wall rubbing against it! Do you suppose she's been walking that way for three days and nights? Why, she's only a child--no older than my own daughter."

Hillas nodded.

"Where are her people? Where's her husband?"

"Down in Yankton, Dan told you, working for the Winter. Got to have the money to live."

"Where's the doctor?"

"Nearest one's in Haney--four days' trip away by stage."

The traveler stared, frowningly.

Dan was looking about the room again and after prodding the gay seat in the corner, lifted the cover and picked up a folded blanket, shaking out the erstwhile padded cushion. He hung the blanket over the back of a chair.

"Mis' Clark, there's nothing but steam will touch membranous croup. We saved my baby that way last year. Set here and I'll fix things."

He put the steaming lard-pail on the floor beside the mother and lifted the blanket over the baby's head. She put up her hand.

"She's so little, Dan, and weak. How am I going to know if she--if she----"

Dan re-arranged the blanket tent. "Jest get under with her yourself, Mis' Clark, then you'll know all that's happening."

With the pincers he picked up a bit of hot iron and dropped it hissing into the pail, which he pushed beneath the tent. The room was oppressively quiet, walled in by the thick sod from the storm. The blanket muffled the sound of the child's breathing and the girl no longer stumbled against the wall.

Dan lifted the corner of the blanket and another bit of iron hissed as it struck the water. The older man leaned toward the younger.

"Stove--fire?" with a gesture of protest against the inadequate oil blaze.

Hillas whispered, "Can't afford it. Coal is \$9.00 in Haney, \$18.00 here."

They sat with heads thrust forward, listening in the intolerable silence. Dan lifted the blanket, hearkened a moment, then--"pst!" another bit of iron fell into the pail. Dan stooped to the tool-chest for a reserve supply when a strangling cough made him spring to his feet and hurriedly lift the blanket.

The child was beating the air with tiny fists, fighting for breath. The mother stood rigid, arms out.

"Turn her this way!" Dan shifted the struggling child, face out. "Now watch out for the----"

The strangling cough broke and a horrible something--"It's the membrane! She's too weak--let me have her!"

Dan snatched the child and turned it face downward. The blue-faced baby fought in a supreme effort--again'the horrible something--then Dan laid the child, white and motionless, in her mother's arms. She held the limp body close, her eyes wide with fear.

"Dan, is--is she----?"

A faint sobbing breath of relief fluttered the pale lips that moved in the merest ghost of a smile. The heavy eyelids half-lifted and the child nestled against its mother's breast. The girl swayed, shaking with sobs, "Baby--baby!"

She struggled for self-control and stood up straight and pale. "Dan, I ought to tell you. When it began to get dark with the storm and time to put up the lantern, I was afraid to leave the baby. If she strangled

when I was gone--with no one to help her--she would die!"

Her lips quivered as she drew the child closer. "I didn't go right away but--I did--at last. I propped her up in bed and ran. If I hadn't----"
Her eyes were wide with the shadowy edge of horror, "If I hadn't--you'd have been lost in the blizzard and--my baby would have died!"

She stood before the men as if for judgment, her face wet with unchecked tears. Dan patted her shoulder dumbly and touched a fresh, livid bruise that ran from the curling hair on her temple down across cheek and chin.

"Did you get this then?"

She nodded. "The storm threw me against the pole when I hoisted the lantern. I thought I'd--never--get back!"

It was Smith who translated Dan's look of appeal for the cup of warm milk and held it to the girl's lips.

"Drink it, Mis' Clark, you need it."

She made heroic attempts to swallow, her head drooped lower over the cup and fell against the driver's rough sleeve. "Poor kid, dead asleep!"

Dan guided her stumbling feet toward the bed that the traveler sprang to open. She guarded the baby in the protecting angle of her arm into safety upon the pillow, then fell like a log beside her. Dan slipped off the felt boots, lifted her feet to the bed and softly drew covers over mother and child.

"Poor kid, but she's grit, clear through!"

Dan walked to the window, looked out at the lessening storm, then at the tiny alarm-clock on the cupboard. "Be over pretty soon now!" He seated himself by the table, dropped his head wearily forward on folded arms and was asleep.

The traveler's face had lost some of its shrewdness. It was as if the white frontier had seized and shaken him into a new conception of life. He moved restlessly along the bench, then stepped softly to the side of the bed and straightened the coverlet into greater nicety while his lips twitched.

With consuming care he folded the blanket and restored the corner seat to its accustomed appearance of luxury. He looked about the room, picked up the gray kitten sleeping contentedly on the floor and settled it on the red cushion with anxious attention to comfort.

He examined with curiosity the few books carefully covered in a corner

shelf, took down an old hand-tooled volume and lifted his eyebrows at the ancient coat of arms on the book plate. He tiptoed across to the bench and pointed to the script beneath the plate. "Edward Winslow (7) to his dear daughter, Alice (8)."

He motioned toward the bed. "Her name?"

Hillas nodded. Smith grinned. "Dan's right. Blood will tell, even to damning the rest of us."

He sat down on the bench. "I understand more than I did, Hillas, since--you crawled back after me--out there. But how can you stand it here? I know you and the Clarks are people of education and, oh, all the rest; you could make your way anywhere."

Hillas spoke slowly. "I think you have to live here to know. It means something to be a pioneer. You can't be one if you've got it in you to be a quitter. The country will be all right some day." He reached for his greatcoat, bringing out a brown-paper parcel. He smiled at it oddly and went on as if talking to himself.

"When the drought and the hot winds come in the Summer and burn the buffalo grass to a tinder and the monotony of the plains weighs on you as it does now, there's a common, low-growing cactus scattered over the prairie that blooms into the gayest red flower you ever saw.

"It wouldn't count for much anywhere else, but the pluck of it, without rain for months, dew even. It's the 'colors of courage.'"

He turned the torn parcel, showing the bright red within, and looked at the cupboard and window with shining, tired eyes.

"Up and down the frontier in these shacks, homes, you'll find things made of turkey-red calico, cheap, common elsewhere----" He fingered the three-cornered flap, "It's our 'colors.'" He put the parcel back in his pocket. "I bought two yards yesterday after--I got a letter at Haney."

Smith sat looking at the gay curtains before him. The fury of the storm was dying down into fitful gusts. Dan stirred, looked quickly toward the bed, then the window, and got up quietly.

"I'll hitch up. We'll stop at Peterson's and tell her to come over." He closed the door noiselessly.

The traveler was frowning intently. Finally he turned toward the boy who sat with his head leaning back against the wall, eyes closed.

"Hillas," his very tones were awkward, "they call me a shrewd business man. I am, it's a selfish job and I'm not reforming now. But twice

to-night you--children have risked your lives, without thought, for a stranger. I've been thinking about that railroad. Haven't you raised any grain or cattle that could be used for freight?"

The low answer was toneless. "Drought killed the crops, prairie fires burned the hay, of course the cattle starved."

"There's no timber, ore, nothing that could be used for east-bound shipment?"

The plainsman looked searchingly into the face of the older man. "There's no timber this side the Missouri. Across the river, it's reservation--Sioux. We----" He frowned and stopped.

Smith stood up, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. "I admitted I was shrewd, Hillas, but I'm not yellow clear through, not enough to betray this part of the frontier anyhow. I had a man along here last Fall spying for minerals. That's why I'm out here now. If you know the location, and we both think you do, I'll put capital in your way to develop the mines and use what pull I have to get the road in."

He looked down at the boy and thrust out a masterful jaw. There was a ring of sincerity no one could mistake when he spoke again.

"This country's a desert now, but I'd back the Sahara peopled with your kind. This is on the square, Hillas, don't tell me you won't believe I'm--American enough to trust?"

The boy tried to speak. With stiffened body and clenched hands he struggled for self-control. Finally in a ragged whisper, "If I try to tell you what--it means--I can't talk! Dan and I know of outcropping coal over in the Buttes." He nodded in the direction of the Missouri, "but we haven't had enough money to file mining claims."

"Know where to dig for samples under this snow?"

The boy nodded. "Some in my shack too. I--" His head went down upon the crossed arms. Smith laid an awkward hand on the heaving shoulders, then rose and crossed the room to where the girl had stumbled in her vigil. Gently he touched the darkened streak where her shoulders had rubbed and blurred the newspaper print. He looked from the relentless white desert outside to the gay bravery within and bent his head, "Turkey-red--calico!"

There was the sound of jingling harness and the crunch of runners. The men bundled into fur coats.

"Hillas, the draw right by the house here," Smith stopped and looked sharply at the plainsman, then went on with firm carelessness, "This draw ought to strike a low grade that would come out near the river

level. Does Dan know Clark's address?" Hillas nodded.

They tiptoed out and closed the door behind them softly. The wind had swept every cloud from the sky and the light of the Northern stars etched a dazzling world. Dan was checking up the leaders as Hillas caught him by the shoulder and shook him like a clumsy bear.

"Dan, you blind old mole, can you see the headlight of the Overland Freight blazing and thundering down that draw over the Great Missouri and Eastern?"

Dan stared.

"I knew you couldn't!" Hillas thumped him with furry fist. "Dan," the wind might easily have drowned the unsteady voice, "I've told Mr. Smith about the coal--for freight. He's going to help us get capital for mining and after that the road."

"Smith! Smith! Well I'll be--aren't you a claim spotter?"

He turned abruptly and crunched toward the stage. His passengers followed. Dan paused with his foot on the runner and looked steadily at the traveler from under lowered, shaggy brows.

"You're going to get a road out here?"

"I've told Hillas I'll put money in your way to mine the coal. Then the railroad will come."

Dan's voice rasped with tension. "We'll get out the coal. Are you going to see that the road's built?"

Unconsciously the traveler held up his right hand, "I am!"

Dan searched his face sharply. Smith nodded, "I'm making my bet on the people--friend!"

It was a new Dan who lifted his bronzed face to a white world. His voice was low and very gentle. "To bring a road here," he swung his whip-handle from Donovan's light around to Carson's square, sweeping in all that lay behind, "out here to them--" The pioneer faced the wide desert that reached into a misty space ablaze with stars, "would be like--playing God!"

The whip thudded softly into the socket and Dan rolled up on the driver's seat. Two men climbed in behind him. The long lash swung out over the leaders as Dan headed the old mail-sled across the drifted right-of-way of the Great Missouri and Eastern.

YAQUI

from the Internet Archive etext of
Tappans Burro And Other Short Stories
By Zane Grey

I.

SUNSET— it was the hour of Yaqui's watch. Chief of a driven remnant of the once mighty tribe, he trusted no sentinel so well as himself at the end of the day's march. While his braves unpacked the tired horses, and his women prepared the evening meal, and his bronze-skinned children played in the sand, Yaqui watched the bold desert horizon.

Long years of hatred had existed between the Yaquis of upland Sonora and the Mexicans from the east. Like eagles, the Indian tribe had lived for centuries in the mountain fastnesses of the Sierra Madre, free, happy, self-sufficient. But wandering prospectors had found gold in their country and that had been the end of their peace. At first the Yaquis, wanting only the wildness and loneliness of their homes, moved farther and farther back from the ever-encroaching advance of the gold diggers. At last, driven from the mountains into the desert, they realized that gold was the doom of their tribe and they began to fight for their land. Bitter and bloody were the battles; and from father to son this wild, free, proud race bequeathed a terrible hatred.

Yaqui was one of the last great chiefs of his once great tribe. All his life he remembered the words of his father and his grandfather — that the Yaquis must find an unknown and impenetrable hiding place or perish from the earth. When Mexican soldiers at the decree of their government made war upon this tribe, killing those who resisted and making slaves of the captured, Yaqui with his family and followers set out upon a last journey across the Sonoran wilderness. Hateful and fearful of the east, whence this blight of gold diggers and land robbers appeared to come, he had fled toward the setting sun into a waste of desert land unknown to his people — a desert of scorching heat and burning sand and tearing cactus and treacherous lava, where water and wood and grass seemed days apart. Some of the youngest children had died on the way and all

except the strong braves were wearing out.

Alone, on a ridge of rising ground, Yaqui faced the back trail and watched with falcon eyes. Miles distant though that horizon was, those desert eyes could have made out horses against the clear sky. He did not gaze steadily, for the Indian method was to flash a look across the spaces, from near to far, and to fix the eye momentarily, to strain the vision and magnify all objects, then to avert the gaze from that direction and presently flash it back again.

Lonely, wild, and grand, the scene seemed one of lifelessness. Only the sun lived, still hot, as it burned red-gold far away on the rugged rim of this desert world. Nothing breathed in that vastness. To Yaqui's ear the silence was music. The red sun slipped down and the desert changed. The golden floor of sand and rock shaded cold to the horizon and above that the sky lost its rose, turning to intense luminous blue. In the far distance the peaks dimmed and vanished in purple. The fire of the western heavens paled and died, and over all the rock-ribbed, sand-encumbered plateau stole a wondrous gray shade. Yaqui watched until that gray changed to black and the horizon line was lost in night. Safe now from pursuers were he and his people until the dawn.

Then, guided by a speck of camp-fire light, he returned to his silent men and moaning women and a scant meal that he divided. Hunger was naught to Yaqui, nor thirst. Four days could he travel the desert without drink, an endurance most of his hardy tribe were trained to. And as for toil, the strength of his giant frame had never reached its limit. But strong chief that he was, when he listened to the moaning women and gazed at the silent, set faces of the children under the starlight he sagged to the sands and, bowing his head, prayed to his gods. He prayed for little — only life, freedom, loneliness, a hidden niche where his people would hear no steps and fear no specters on their trail. Then with unquenchable faith he stretched his great length on the sands; and the night was as a moment.

In the gray of a dawn cold, pure, and silent, with the radiant morning star shining like a silver moon, the long file of Yaquis rode and tramped westward, on down the rugged bare slopes of this unknown desert.

And out of the relentless east, land of enemies, rose the glaring sun. Like magic the frost melted off the rocks and

the cool freshness of morning changed to a fiery breath. The sun climbed, and the leagues were as long as the hours. Down into a broad region of lava toiled the fugitives. Travel over the jagged crusts and through the poison-spiked cholla lamed the horses and made walking imperative. Yaqui drove his people before him, and some of the weakest fell by the way.

Out of the hot lava and stinging cactus the Indians toiled and entered a region of bare stone, cut by wind and water into labyrinthine passages where, even if they had left tracks on the hard rocks, few pursuers could have followed them. Yaqui told this to his people, told them he saw sheep on the peaks above and smelled water, and thus urged them on and on league after league toward distant purple heights. Vast and hard as had been the desert behind them, this strange upflung desert before them seemed vaster and grimmer. The trackless way led ever upward by winding passages and gorges — a gloomy and weird region of colored stone. And over all reigned the terrible merciless sun.

Yaqui sacrificed horses to the thirst and hunger of his people and abandoned the horror of toil under the sun to a slower progress by night. Blanched and magnified under the great stars, the iron-bound desert of riven rock, so unreal and weird, brought forth a chant from the lips of Yaqui's women. His braves, stoic like himself, endured and plodded on, lightening burdens of the weaker and eventually carrying the children. That night passed and a day of stupor in the shade of sun-heated rock; another night led the fugitives onward and upward through a maze of shattered cliffs, black and wild. Day dawned once more, showing Yaqui by the pitiless light that only his men could endure much more of this dragging on.

He made camp there and encouraged his people by a faith that had come to him during the night — a whisper from the spirit of his forefathers — to endure, to live, to go to a beautiful end his vision could not see. Then Yaqui stalked alone off into the fastnesses of the rocks and prayed to his gods for guidance. All about him were silence, desolation, a gray barren world of rock, a black barren world of lava. Far as his falcon eye could see to the north and east and south stretched the illimitable glaring desert, rough, peaked, spiked, riven, ghastly with yellow slopes* bleak with its bare belts, terrible with its fluted and upflung plateaus, stone faced by endless ramparts and fast bound to the fading distance. From the west, up over the

dark and forlorn heights, Yaqui heard the whispers of his dead forefathers.

Another dawn found Yaqui on the great heights with the sunrise at his back and with another and more promising world at his feet.

"Land of our forefathers!" he cried out sonorously to his people, gazing mutely down into the promised land. A vast gray-green valley yawned at their feet. Leagues of grassy, rock-ribbed, and tree-dotted slopes led down to a gleaming white stream, winding like a silver ribbon down the valley, to lose itself far in the lower country, where the colored desert merged into an immense and boundless void of hazy blue — the sea.

"Great Water, where the sun sleeps," said Yaqui with long arm outstretched. "Yaqui's father's father saw it."

Yaqui carried the boy and led the way down from the heights. Mountain sheep and wild horses and deer and quail that had never before seen man showed no fear of this invasion of their wild home. And Yaqui's people, foot-sore and starved, gazed round them and, in the seeming safety of this desert-locked valley with its grass and water and wood and abundant game, they took hope again and saw their prayers answered and happiness once more possible. New life flushed their veins. The long slopes, ever greener as they descended, were welcome to aching eyes so tired of the glaring expanses of the desert.

For an encampment Yaqui chose the head of the valley. Wide and gently sloping, with a rock-walled spring that was the source of the stream, and large iron wood trees and pines and paloverdes, this lonely hidden spot satisfied the longing in Yaqui's heart. Almost his joy was complete. But never could he feel wholly secure again, even had he wings of an eagle. For Yaqui's keen eyes had seen gold in the sands of the stream; and gold spelled the doom of the Indian. Still Yaqui was grateful and content. Not soon indeed would his people be tracked to this fastness, and perhaps never. He cautioned his braves to save their scant gun ammunition, sending them out with bows and arrows to kill the tame deer and antelope. The weary squaws no longer chanted the melancholy songs of their woe. The long travel had ended. They unpacked their stores under the wide-spreading pines, made fires to roast the meat that would soon be brought, and attended to the ailments of the few children left to them. Soon the naked little ones,

starved and cut and worn as they were, took to the clear cool water like goslings learning to swim.

Yaqui, carrying his rifle, stalked abroad to learn more of this wonderful valley. Stretching at length along the stream, he drank deeply, as an Indian who loved mountain water. The glint of gold in the wet sand did not please him as had the sweetness of the cold water. Grasping up a handful of sand and pebbles, he rubbed and washed it in his palm. Tiny grains of gold and little nuggets of gold! Somewhere up at the head of this valley lay the mother lode from which the gold had washed down.

Yaqui knew that here was treasure for which the white men would spill blood and sell their souls. But to the Indians — the Papagos, the Yumas, the man-eating Seris, and especially to the Yaquis — gold was no more than rock or sand, except that they hated it for the curse of white hunters it lured to the desert. Yaqui had found many a rich vein and ledge and placer of gold. He had hated them, and now more than any other he hated this new discovery. It would be a constant peril to his people. In times of flood this mountain stream would carry grains of gold as far as it flowed down on the desert. Yaqui saw in it a menace. But there was hope in the fact that many treasures of the desert heights would never be seen by white men. His father had told him that. This gray valley was high, cradled in the rocky uplands, and it might be inaccessible from below.

Yaqui set out to see. His stride was that of the strongest and tallest of his tribe, and distance meant little to him. Hunger gnawed at his vitals, but the long march across the wastes and heights had not tired him. Yaqui had never known exhaustion. Before the sun stood straight overhead he had ascertained that this valley of promise was shut off from the west and that the stream failed in impassable desert. From north and east he had traveled, and therefore felt a grim security. But to the south he turned apprehensive eyes. Long he tramped and high he climbed, at last to see that the valley, this land of his forefathers, could be gained from the south. Range and ridge sloped gradually to a barren desolate land of sun and cacti, far as his desert eyes could see. That must be the land of the Seris, the man-eaters. But it was a waterless hell in summer. No fear from the south till the winter rains fell! Yaqui returned to his camp, reaching there at sunset. There was joy in the dusky welcoming eyes of his young wife as she placed fresh meat before him.

"Yaqui's only son will live," she said, and pointed to the frail boy as he slept. The chief gazed somberly at the little brown face of his son, the last of his race.

Days passed. With rest and food and water the gloomy spirit of the Yaquis underwent a gradual change. The wild valley was an Indian's happy hunting ground, encompassed by lofty heights known only to sheep and eagles. Like wild animals, all savages, in the peace and loneliness of a secluded region, soon forgot past trials and fears. Still, the chief Yaqui did not forget, but as time passed and nothing disturbed the serenity of this hiding place his vigilance slowly relaxed. The wind and the sun and the solitude and the presence of antelope and wild horses always within sight of camp — these factors of primitive nature had a healing effect upon his sore heart. In the canyons he found graves and bones of his progenitors.

Days passed into weeks. The scarlet blossoms flamed at the long ends of the ocatilla; one morning the pale vordes, which had been bare and shiny green, appeared to have burst into full bloom, a yellow flowering that absorbed the sunlight; cacti opened great buds of magenta; from the canyon walls, on inaccessible ledges, hung the exquisite and rare desert flowers, lluvia d'oro, shower of gold; and many beautiful flowers lifted their faces out of the tall grasses. This magic of spring did not last long. The flowers faded, died, and blew away on the dry wind; the tall grasses slowly yellowed and bleached. Summer came. The glaring sun blazed over the eastern ramparts, burned white down over the still solemn valley, and sank like a huge ball of fire into the distant hazy sea. With the torrid heat of desert Sonora came a sense of absolute security to the chief Yaqui. His new home was locked in the furnace of the sun-blasted waste land. The clear spring of mountain water sank lower and lower, yet it did not fail. The birds and beasts that visited the valley attested to the nature of the surrounding country. So the time came when Yaqui forgot the strange feeling of distant steps upon his trail.

When autumn came all the valley was dry and gray and withered, except the green line along the stream and the perennial freshness of the cactus plants and the everlasting green of the paloverdes. With the winter season came the rains, and a wave of ever-brightening green flushed the vast valley from its eastern height of slope to the far distant mouth, where it opened into the barren breaks of the desert.

Manifestly the god of the Yaquis had not forgotten them. As the months passed child after child was born to the women of the tribe. Yaqui's dusky-eyed wife bore him a healthy girl baby. As the chief balanced the tiny brown form in his great hand he remembered speech of his own father's: "Son, let the Yaquis go back to the mountains of the setting sun — to a land free from white men and gold and fire water, to the desert valley where deer graze with horses. There let the Yaquis multiply into a great people or perish from the earth."

Yaqui watched his girl baby with a gleam of troubled hope lighting in his face. His father had spoken prophecy. There waved the green grass of the broad valley, dotted with wild horses, antelope, and deer grazing among his stock. Here in his hand lay another child — a woman child — and he had believed his son to be the last of his race. It was not too late. The god of the Indian was good. His branch of the Yaquis would mother and father a great people. But even as he fondled his babe the toe of his moccasin stirred grains of gold in the sand.

Love of life lulled Yaqui back into his dreams. To live, to have his people round him, to see his dusky-eyed wife at her work, to watch the little naked children playing in the grass, to look out over that rolling, endless green valley, so wild, so lonely, so fertile — such a proof of god in the desert — to feel the hot sun and the sweet wind and the cool night, to linger on the heights watching, listening, feeling, to stalk the keen-eyed mountain sheep, to eat fresh meat and drink pure water, to rest through the solemn still noons and sleep away the silent melancholy nights, to enjoy the games of his forefathers — wild games of riding and running — to steal off alone into the desert and endure heat, thirst, cold, dust, starvation while he sought the Indian gods hidden in the rocks, to be free of the white man whom he recognized as a superior and a baser being — to live like the eagles — to live — Yaqui asked no more.

Yaqui laid the baby back in the cradle of its mother's breast and stalked out as a chief to inspire his people.

In that high altitude the morning air was cold, exhilarating, sweet to breathe and wonderful to send the blood racing. Some winter mornings there was just a touch of frost on the leaves. The sunshine was welcome, the day was short, the night was long. Yaqui's people reverted to their old order of happy primitive life before

the white man had come with greed for gold and lust to kill.

The day dawned in which Yaqui took his son out and put him upon a horse. As horsemen the Yaquis excelled all other Indian tribes of the Southwest. Boys were given lessons at an early age and taught to ride bareback. Thus as youths they developed exceeding skill and strength.

Some of the braves had rounded up a band of wild horses and had driven them into a rough rock-walled triangle, a natural trap, the opening of which they had closed with a rude fence. On this morning the Yaquis all assembled to see the wild horses broken. Yaqui, as an inspiration to his little son and to the other boys of the tribe, chose the vicious leader of the band as the horse he would first ride and break. High on the rocky wall perched the black-eyed boys, eager and restless, excited and wondering, some of them naked and all of them stretching out tousled black heads with shining ragged hair flying in the wind. The women and girls of the tribe occupied another position along the outcropping of gray wall, their colorful garments lending contrast to the scene.

The inclosure was wide and long, containing both level and uneven ground, some of which was grass and some sand and rock. A few ironwood trees and one huge palo-verde, under which Indians were lolling, afforded shade. At the edge of the highest slope began a line of pine trees that reached up to the bare gray heights.

Yaqui had his braves drive the vicious leader of the wild horses out into the open. It was a stallion, of ungainly shape and rusty color, no longer young. With ugly head high, nostrils distended, mouth open and ears up, showing the white of vicious, fiery eyes, it pranced in the middle of the circle drawn by its captors.

Yaqui advanced with his long leather riata, and, once clear of the ring of horsemen inclosing the stallion, he waved them back. Then as the wild steed plunged to and fro, seeking for an opening in that circle, Yaqui swung the long noose. He missed twice. The third cast caught its mark, the snarling nose of this savage horse. Yaqui hauled the lasso taut. Then with snort of fright the stallion lunged and reared, pawing the air. Yaqui, hauling hand over hand, pulled him down and approached him at the same time. Shuddering all over, breathing with hard snorts, the stallion faced his captor one moment, as if ready to fight.

But fear predominated. He leaped away. At the end of that leap, so powerful was the strain on him, he went down in the sand. Up he sprang, wilder than ever, and dashed forward, dragging the Indian, gaining yards of the lasso. But the mounted Yaquis blocked his passage; he had to swerve; and as he ran desperately in a circle once more the giant chief hauled hand over hand on the rope. Suddenly Yaqui bounded in and with a tremendous leap, like the leap of a huge panther, he gained the back of the stallion and seemed to become fixed there. He dropped the lasso, and with the first startled jump of the stallion the noose loosened and slipped off. Except for Yaqui's great, long brown legs, with their strung bands of muscle set like steel, the stallion was free.

The stallion bolted for the open. Only the rock wall checked his headlong flight. Then he wheeled and ran along the wall, bounding over rocks and ditches, stretching out until, with magnificent stride, he was running at his topmost speed. Along one wall and then the other he dashed, round and round and across, until the moment came when panic succeeded to fury, and then his tremendous energies were directed to the displacement of his rider. Wildly he pitched. With head down, legs stiff, feet together, he plunged over the sand, plowing up the dust, and bounding straight up. But he could not unseat his inexorable rider. Yaqui's legs banded his belly and were as steel. Then the stallion, now lashed into white lather of sweat and froth, lunged high to paw the air and scream and plunge down to pitch again. His motions soon lost their energy, though not their fury. Then he reached back with eyes of fire and open mouth to bite. Yaqui's huge fist met him, first on the right, then, as he turned, on the left. Last he plunged to his knees and with rumbling heave of anger he fell on his side, meaning to roll over his rider. But the Yaqui's leg on that side flashed high while his hands twisted hard in the long mane. When the foiled horse rose again Yaqui rose with him, again fixed tight on his back. Another dash and burst of running, wild and blind this time and plainly losing speed, showed the weakening of the stallion. And the time arrived when, spent and beaten, he fell in the sand.

"Let Yaqui's son learn to ride like his father," said the chief to his gleeful, worshiping son.

Then the chief again stalked forth, drawn irresistibly by something in the hour.

"Let Yaqui's son watch and remember to tell his son's son," he said.

He scattered his riders to block the few passages out of the valley and he ordered his son and all the women of the tribe and their children again to climb high on the rocks, there to watch. The Indian gods said this day marked the rejuvenation of their tribe. Let his son, who would be chief some day, and his people, see the great runner of the Yaquis.

Naked except for his moccasins, the giant chief broke into a slow trot that was habitual with him when alone on a trail; and he crossed the stream and the plots of sand, and headed out into the grassy valley where deer grazed with the horses. Yaqui selected the one that appeared largest and strongest of the herd and to it he called in a loud voice, meant as well for the spirit of his forefathers and for his gods, watching and listening from the heights: "Yaqui runs to kill!"

The sleek gray deer left off their grazing and stood at gaze, with long ears erect. Then they bounded off. Yaqui broke from his trot into a long, swinging lope and the length of his stride was such that he seemed to fly over the ground. Up the valley the deer scattered and Yaqui ran in the trail of the one to which he had called. Half a mile off it halted to look back. Then it grazed a little, but soon lifted its head to look again. Yaqui ran on at the same easy, distance-devouring stride. Presently the deer dashed away and kept on until it was a mere speck in Yaqui's eyes. It climbed a deer trail that led over the heights, to be turned back there by one of Yaqui's braves. Then it crossed the wide valley to be turned back by insurmountable cliffs. Yaqui kept it in sight and watched it trot and stop, run and walk and stop again, all the way up the long grassy slope toward the head of the valley.

Here among rocks and trees Yaqui lost sight of his quarry, but he trailed it with scarcely a slackening of his pace. At length, coming out upon a level open bench, he saw the deer he had chosen to run to death. It was looking back.

Down the grassy middle of the vast valley, clear to the mouth where the stream tumbled off into space, across the wide level from slope to slope, back under the beetling heights, Yaqui pursued the doomed deer.

Leagues and leagues of fleet running had availed the deer nothing. It could not shake off the man. More and more the distance between them lessened. Terror now added to the gradual exhaustion of the four-footed creature, designed by Nature to escape its foes. Yaqui, perfect in all the primal attributes of man, was its superior. The race was not to the swift but to the enduring.

Within sight of his people and his little son Yaqui overtook the staggering deer and broke its neck with his naked hands. Then for an instant he stood erect over his fallen quarry, a tall and gaunt giant, bathed in the weird afterglow of sunset; and he lifted a long arm to the heights, as if calling upon his spirits there to gaze down upon the victory of the red man.

II

IT WAS toward evening of another day, all the hours of which had haunted Yaqui with a nameless oppression. Like a deer that scented a faint strange taint on the pure air Yaqui pointed his sensitive nose toward the east, whence came the soft wind.

Suddenly his strong vision quivered to the movement of distant objects on the southern slope. Halting, he fixed his gaze. Long line of moving dots! Neither deer nor sheep nor antelope traveled in that formation. The objects were men. Yaqui's magnified sight caught the glint of sunset red on shining guns. Mexican soldiers! That nameless haunting fear of the south, long lulled, now had its fulfillment.

Yaqui leaped with gigantic bounds down the slope. Like an antelope he sprang over rocks and dips, and once on the grassy downs he ran the swiftest race of his life. His piercing yells warned his people in time to save them from being surprised by the soldiers. The first shots of combat were fired as he hurdled the several courses of the stream. Yaqui saw the running and crawling forms of men in dusty blue — saw them aim short carbines — saw spurts of flame and puffs of smoke.

Yaqui's last few bounds carried him into the stone-walled encampment, and the whistling bullets that missed him told how the line of soldiers was spreading to surround the place. Yaqui flung himself behind the wall and crawled to where his braves knelt with guns and bows ready. Some of them were shooting. The women and children were hud-

dled somewhere out of sight. Steel-jacketed bullets cracked on the rocks and whined away. Yaqui knew how poor was the marksmanship of the Mexicans; nevertheless it seemed to him they were shooting high. The position of the Indians was open to fire from several angles.

During a lull in the firing a hoarse yell pealed out. Yaqui knew Spanish. "Surrender, Yaquis!" was the command. The Yaquis answered by well-aimed bullets that brought sharp cries from the soldiers. Soon the encampment appeared entirely surrounded. Reports came from all sides and bullets whistled high, spitting into the trees. Then occurred another lull in the firing. Again a voice pealed out: "Surrender, Yaquis, save your lives !"

The Indians recognized their doom. Each man had only a few shells for his gun. Many had only bows and arrows. They would be shot like wolves in a trap. But no Yaqui spoke a word.

Nevertheless, when darkness put an end to their shooting there were only a few who had a shell left. The Mexicans grasped the situation and grew bold. They built fires off under the trees. They crept down to the walls and threw stones into the encampment and yelled derisively: "Yaqui dogs!" They kept up a desultory shooting from all sides as if to make known to the Indians that they were surrounded and vigilantly watched.

At dawn the Mexicans began another heavy volleying, firing into the encampment without aim but with deadly intent. Then, yelling their racial hatred of the Yaquis, they charged the camp. It was an unequal battle. Out-numbered and without ammunition the Yaquis fought a desperate but losing fight. One by one they were set upon by several, sometimes by half a dozen, Mexicans and killed or beaten into insensibility.

Yaqui formed the center of several storms of conflict. With clubbed rifle he was like a giant fighting down a horde of little men.

"Kill the big devil!" cried a soldier.

From the thick of that melee sounded Spanish curses and maledictions and dull thuds and groans as well. The Yaqui was a match for all that could surround him. A Mexican fired a pistol. Then the officer came running to knock aside the weapon. He shouted to his men to cap-

ture the Yaqui chief. The Mexicans pressed closer, dodging the sweeping rifle, and one of them plunged at the heels of the Indian. Another did likewise and they tripped up the giant, who was then piled upon by a number of cursing soldiers. Like a mad bull Yaqui heaved and tossed, but to no avail. He was overpowered and bound with a lasso, and tied upright to the paloverde under which he had so often rested.

His capture ended the battle. And the Mexicans began to run about, searching. Daylight had come. From under a ledge of rock the Indian women and children were driven. One lithe, quick boy eluded the soldiers. He slipped out of their hands and ran. As he looked back over his shoulder his dark face shone wildly. It was Yaqui's son. Like a deer he ran, not heeding the stern calls to halt. "Shoot!" ordered the officer. Then the soldiers leveled rifles and began to fire. Puffs of dust struck up behind, beside and beyond that flying form. But none hit him. They shot at him until he appeared to be out of range. And all eyes watched him flee. Then a last bullet struck its flying mark. The watchers heard a shrill cry of agony and saw the lad fall.

All the Indians were tied hand and foot and herded into a small space and guarded as if they had been wild cattle.

After several hours of resting and feasting and celebrating what manifestly was regarded as a great victory, the officer ordered the capture of horses and the burning of effects not transportable. Soon the beautiful encampment of the Yaquis was a scene of blackened and smoking ruin. Then, driving the Yaquis in a herd before them, the Mexicans, most of them now mounted on Indian horses, faced the ascent of the slope by which they had entered the valley.

Far down that ragged mountain slope the Mexicans halted at the camp they had left when they made their attack on the Yaquis. Mules and burros, packsaddles and camp duffel occupied a dusty bench upon which there grew a scant vegetation. All round were black slopes of ragged lava and patches of glistening white cholla.

The Yaquis received but little water and food, no blankets to sleep on, no rest from tight bonds, no bandaging of their fly-tormented wounds. But they bore their ills as if they had none.

Yaqui sat with his back to a stone and when unobserved by the guards he would whisper to those of his people nearest to him. Impassively but with intent faces they listened. His words had some strange, powerful, sustaining effect. And all the time his inscrutable gaze swept down off the lava heights to the hazy blue gulf of the sea.

Dawn disclosed the fact that two of the Yaquis were badly wounded and could not be driven to make a start. Perhaps they meant to force the death that awaited them farther down the trail; perhaps they were absorbed in the morbid gloom of pain and departing strength. At last the officer, weary of his subordinate's failure to stir these men, dragged at them himself, kicked and beat them, cursing the while. "Yaqui dogs! You go to the henequen fields!"

The older of these wounded Indians, a man of lofty stature and mien, suddenly arose. Swiftly his brown arm flashed. He grasped a billet of wood from a packsaddle and struck the officer down. The blow lacked force. It was evident that the Yaqui, for all his magnificent spirit, could scarcely stand. Excitedly the soldiers yelled, and some brandished weapons. The officer staggered to his feet, livid and furious, snarling like a dog, and ordering his men to hold back, he drew a pistol to kill the Yaqui. The scorn, the contempt, the serenity of the Indian, instead of rousing his respect, incurred a fury which demanded more than death.

"You shall walk the cholla torture!" he shrieked, waving his pistol in the air.

In northwest Mexico, for longer than the oldest inhabitant could remember, there had been a notorious rumor of the cholla torture that the Yaquis meted out to their

Mexican captives. This cholla torture consisted of ripping the skin off the soles of Mexicans' feet and driving them to walk upon the cactus beds until they died.

The two wounded Indians, with bleeding raw feet, were dragged to the cholla torture. They walked the white, glistening, needle-spiked beds of cholla blind to the cruel jeers and mute wonderment and vile maledictions of their hereditary foes. The giant Yaqui who had struck down the officer stalked unaided across the beds of dry cholla. The cones cracked like live bits of steel. They collected on the Yaqui's feet until he was lifting pads of cactus. He walked

erect, with a quivering of all the muscles of his naked bronze body, and his dark face was set in a terrible hardness of scorn for his murderers.

Then when the mass of cactus cones adhering to the Yaqui's feet grew so heavy that he became anchored in his tracks the Mexican officer, with a fury that was not all hate, ordered his soldiers to dispatch these two Indians, who were beyond the reach of a torture hideous and appalling to all Mexicans. Yaqui, the chief, looked on inscrutably, towering above the bowed heads of his women.

This execution sobered the soldiers. Not only extermination did they mean to mete out to the Yaqui, but an extermination of horrible toil, by which the Mexicans were to profit.

Montes, a Brazilian, lolled in the shady spot on the dock. The hot sun of Yucatan was more than enough for him. The still air reeked with a hot pungent odor of henequen. Montes had learned to hate the smell. He was in Yucatan on a mission for the Brazilian government and also as an agent to study the sisal product — an advantageous business for him, to which he had devoted himself with enthusiasm and energy.

But two unforeseen circumstances had disturbed him of late and rendered less happy his devotion to his tasks. His vanity had been piqued, his pride had been hurt, his heart had been stormed by one of Merida's coquettish beauties. And the plight of the poor Yaqui Indians, slaves in the henequen fields, had so roused his compassion that he had neglected his work.

So, as Montes idled there in the shade, with his legs dangling over the dock, a time came in his reflection when he was confronted with a choice between the longing to go home and a strange desire to stay. He gazed out into the gulf. The gunboat Esyranza had come to anchor in the roads off Progreso. She had a cargo of human freight — Yaqui Indian prisoners from the wild plateaus of Northern Sonora — more slaves to be broken in the terrible henequen fields. At that moment of Montes's indecision he espied Lieutenant Perez coming down the dock at the head of a file of r urates.

Gazing at Perez intently, the Brazilian experienced a slight cold shock of decision. He would prolong his stay in Yucatan. Strange was the nameless something that haunted him. Jealous curiosity, he called it, bitterly. Perez had

the favor of the proud mother of Senorita Dolores Mendoza, the coquettish beauty who had smiled upon Montes. She cared no more for Perez than she cared for him or any of the young bloods of Merida. But she would marry Perez.

Montes rose and stepped out of the shade. His commission in Yucatan put him on common ground with Perez, but he had always felt looked down upon by this little Yucatecan.

"Buenos dias, senor," replied Perez to his greeting.
"More Yaquis."

A barge was made fast to the end of the dock and the Yaquis driven off and held there in a closely guarded group.

The time came when Perez halted the loading of henequen long enough to allow the prisoners to march up the dock between files of rurales. They passed under the shadows of the huge warehouses, out into a glaring square where the bare sand radiated veils of heat.

At an order from Perez, soldiers began separating the Yaqui women and children from the men. They were formed in two lines. Then Perez went among them, pointing out one, then another.

Montes suddenly grasped the significance of this scene and it had strange effect upon him. Yaqui father and son — husband and wife — mother and child did not yet realize that here they were to be parted — that this separation was forever. Then one young woman, tall, with striking dark face, beautiful with the grace of some wild creature, instinctively divined the truth and she cried out hoarsely. The silence, the stoicism of these Indians seemed broken. This woman had a baby in her arms. Running across the aisle of sand, she faced a huge Yaqui and cried aloud in poignant broken speech. This giant was her husband and the father of that dusky-eyed baby. He spoke, laid a hand on her and stepped out. Perez, who had been at the other end of the aisle, saw the movement and strode toward them.

"Back, Yaqui dogs!" he yelled stridently, and he flashed his bright sword.

With tremendous stride the Yaqui reached Perez and towered over him.

"Capitan, let my wife and child go where Yaqui goes,"

demanded the Indian in deep voice of sonorous dignity. His Spanish was well spoken. His bearing was that of a chief. He asked what seemed his right, even of a ruthless enemy.

But Perez saw nothing but affront to his authority. At his order the rurales clubbed Yaqui back into his squad.

They would have done the same for the stricken wife, had she not backed away from their threatening advances. She had time for a long agonized look into the terrible face of her husband. Then she was driven away in one squad and he was left in the other.

Montes thought he would forever carry in memory the tragic face of that Yaqui's wife. Indians had hearts and souls the same as white people. It was a ridiculous and extraordinary and base thing to be callous to the truth. Montes had spent not a little time in the pampas among the Gauchos and for that bold race he had admiration and respect. Indeed, coming to think about it, the Gauchos resembled these Yaquis. Montes took the trouble to go among English and American acquaintances he had made in Progreso, and learned more about this oppressed tribe.

The vast plateau of northwestern Mexico, a desert and mountainous region rich in minerals, was the home of the Yaquis. For more than one hundred and sixty years there had been war between the Yaquis and the Mexicans. And recently, following a bloody raid credited to the Yaquis, the government that happened to be in power determined to exterminate them. To that end it was hunting the Indians down, killing those who resisted capture, and sending the rest to the torture of the henequen fields.

But more interesting was the new information that Montes gathered. The Yaquis were an extraordinary, able-bodied, and intelligent people. Most of them spoke Spanish. They had many aboriginal customs and beliefs, but some were Roman Catholics. The braves made better miners and laborers than white men. Moreover, they possessed singular mechanical gifts and quickly learned to operate machines more efficiently than most whites. They possessed wonderful physical development and a marvelous endurance. At sixty years Yaquis had perfectly sound white teeth and hair as black as night. These desert men could travel seventy miles on foot in one day with only a bag of pinole. Water they could do without for days. And it was said that some of the Yaqui runners performed

feats of speed, strength, and endurance beyond credence*
Montes, remembering the seven-foot stature of that Yaqui chief and the spread of shoulders and the wonder of his spare lithe limbs, thought that he could believe much.

The act of Perez in deliberately parting the chief from his loved ones was cruel and despicable; and it seemed to establish in Montes's mind an excuse for the disgust and hate he had come to feel for the tyrannical little officer. But, being frank with himself, Montes confessed that this act had only fixed a hate he already had acquired.

The Brazilian convinced himself that he had intuitively grasped a portent apparently lost on Perez. One of those silent, intent-faced Yaquis was going to kill this epauleted scion of a rich Yucatecan house. Montes had read it in these faces. He had lived among the blood-spilling Gauchos and he knew the menace of silent fierce savages. And he did not make any bones about the admission to himself that he hoped some Yaqui would kill the peacocked Mexican. Montes had Spanish in him, and something of the raw passion of the Gauchos he admired; and it suited him to absorb this morbid presentiment. The Yaqui chief fascinated him, impelled him. Montes determined to learn where this giant had been sent and to watch him, win his confidence, if such a thing was possible. Quien sabe? Montes felt more reasons than one for his desire to get under the skin of this big Yaqui.

III

IN THE interior of Yucatan there were vast barren areas of land fit only for the production of henequen. Nothing but jungle and henequen would grow there. It was a limestone country. The soil could not absorb water. It soaked through. Here and there, miles apart, were cenotes, underground caverns full of water, and usually these marked the location of a hacienda of one of the rich planters. The climate was hot, humid, and for any people used to high altitudes it spelled death.

The plantation of Don Sancho Perez, father of the young lieutenant, consisted of fifty thousand acres. It adjoined the hundred-thousand-acre tract of Donna Isabel Mendoza. The old Don was ambitious to merge the plantations into one, so that he could dominate the fiber output of that region. To this end he had long sought to win for his son the hand of Donna Isabel's beautiful daughter.

The big Yaqui Indian who had been wantonly separated from his wife by young Perez was in the squad of prisoners that had been picked out by the young officer to work on his father's plantation.

They were manacled at night and herded like wild beasts into a pen and watched by armed guards. They were routed out at dawn and put to work in the fiber fields. For food they had, each of them, a single lump of coarse soggy bread — one lump once every day. When the weaker among them began to lag, to slow down, to sicken, they were whipped to their tasks. 1

Yaqui knew that never again would he see his wife and baby — never hear from them — never know what became of them. He was worked like a galley slave, all the harder because of his great strength and endurance. He would be driven until he broke down.

Yaqui's work consisted of cutting henequen fiber leaves. He had a curved machete and he walked down the endless aisles between the lines of great century plants and from each plant he cut the lower circle of leaves. Each plant gave him a heavy load and he carried it to the nearest one of the hand-car tracks that crossed the plantation. The work of other Indians was to push hand cars along these tracks and gather the loads.

It took Yaqui six days to cut along the length of one aisle. And as far as he could see stretched a vast, hot, green wilderness with its never-ending lines and lanes, its labyrinthine maze of intersecting aisles, its hazy, copper-hued horizons speared and spiked by the great bayonet-like leaves. He had been born and raised on the rugged mountain plateaus far to the north, where the clear, sweet, cold morning air stung and the midday sun was only warm to his back, where there were grass and water and flowers and trees, where the purple canyons yawned and the black peaks searched the sky. Here he was chained in the thick, hot, moist night, where the air was foul, and driven out in the long day under a fiery sun, where the henequen reeked and his breath clogged in his throat and his eyes were burning balls and his bare feet were like rotting hoofs.

The time came when Montes saw that the Yaqui looked no more toward that northland which he would never see again. He dreamed no more hopeless dreams. Somehow he knew when his wife and baby were no more a part of him on the earth. For something within him died and

there were strange, silent voices at his elbow. He listened to them. And in the depths of his being there boiled a maelstrom of blood. He worked on and waited.

At night in the close-crowded filthy pen, with the dampness of tropical dews stealing in, and all about him the silent prostrate forms of his stricken people, he lay awake and waited enduringly through the long hours till a fitful sleep came to him. By day in the henequen fields, with the furnace blasts of wind swirling down the aisles, with the moans of his beaten and failing comrades full in his ears, he waited with a Yaqui's patience.

He saw his people beaten and scourged and starved. He saw them sicken and fail — wilt under the hot sun — die in the henequen aisles — and be thrown like dogs into ditches with quicklime. One by one they went and when they were nearly all gone another squad took their places. The Yaqui recognized Indians of other tribes of his race. But they did not know him. He had greatly changed. Only the shell of him was left. And that seemed unbreakable, deathless. He did not tell these newcomers to the fields what torture lay in store for them. He might have been dumb. He only waited, adding day by day, in the horror of the last throes of his old comrades, something more to that hell in his blood. He watched them die and then the beginning of the end for his new comrades. They were doomed. They were to be driven till they dropped. And others would be brought to fill their places, till at last there were no Yaquis left. The sun was setting for his race.

The Yaqui and his fellow toilers had one day of rest — the Sabbath. There was no freedom. And always there were guards and soldiers. Sunday was the day of bull fights in the great corral at the hacienda. And on these occasions Yaqui was given extra work. Montes knew the Indian looked forward to this day. The old Don's son, Lieutenant Perez, would come down from the city to attend the fight. Then surely Yaqui fed his dark soul with more cunning, more patience, more promise.

It was the Yaqui's work to help drag disemboweled and dying horses from the bull ring and to return with sand to cover up the gory spots in the arena. Often Montes saw him look up at the crowded circle of seats and at the box where the gray old Don and his people and friends watched the spectacle. There were handsome women with white lace over their heads and in whose dark and slumberous eyes lurked something the Yaqui knew. It was something

that was in the race. Lieutenant Perez was there leaning toward the proud senorita. The Indian watched her with strange intensity. She appeared indifferent to the efforts of the picadores and the banderilleros, those men in the arena whose duty it was to infuriate the bull for the artist with the sword — the matador. When he appeared the beautiful senorita wakened to interest. But not until there was blood on the bright blade did she show the fire and passion of her nature. It was sight of blood that quickened her. It was death, then, that she wanted to see.

And last the Yaqui let his gaze rivet on the dark, arrogant visage of young Perez. Did not the great chief then become superhuman, or was it only Montes's morbid fancy? When Yaqui turned away, did he not feel a promise of fulfillment in the red haze of the afternoon sun, in the red tinge of the stained sand, in the red and dripping tongue of the tortured bull? Montes knew the Yaqui only needed to live long enough and there would be something. And death seemed aloof from this Indian. The ferocity of the desert was in him and its incalculable force of life. In his eyes had burned a seared memory of the violent thrust with which Perez had driven his wife and baby forever from his sight.

Montes's changed attitude evidently found favor in the proud senorita's eyes. She had but trifled with an earnest and humble suitor; to the advances of a man, bold, ardent, strange, with something unfathomable in his wooing, she was not indifferent. The fact did not cool Montes's passion, but it changed him somehow. The Spanish in him was the part that so ardently loved and hated; his mother had been French, and from her he had inherited qualities that kept him eternally in conflict with his instincts.

Montes had his living quarters in Merida, where all the rich henequen planters had town houses. It was not a long horseback ride out to the haciendas of the two families in which Montes had become most interested. His habit of late, after returning from a visit to the henequen fields, had been to choose the early warm hours of the afternoon to call upon Senorita Mendoza. There had been a time when his calls had been formally received by the Donna Isabel, but of late she had persisted in her siesta, leaving Montes to Dolores. Montes had grasped the significance of this — the future of Dolores had been settled and there no longer was risk in leaving her alone. But Montes had developed a theory that the future of any young woman was an uncertainty.

The Mendoza town house stood in the outskirts of fashionable Merida. The streets were white, the houses were white, the native Mayan women wore white, and always it seemed to Montes as he took the familiar walk that the white sun blazed down on an immaculate city. But there were dark records against the purity of Merida and the Yaqui slave driving was one of them. The Mendoza mansion had been built with money coining from the henequen fields. It stood high on a knoll, a stately white structure looking down upon a formal garden, where white pillars and statues gleamed among green palms and bowers of red roses. At the entrance, on each side of the wide flagstone walk, stood a huge henequen plant.

On this day the family was in town and Montes expected that the senorita would see him coining. He derived pleasure from the assurance that, compared with Perez, he was someone good to look at. Beside him the officer was a swarthy undersized youth. But Montes failed to see the white figure of the girl and suffered chagrin for his vanity.

The day was warm. As he climbed the high, wide stone steps his brow grew moist and an oppression weighed upon him. Only in the very early morning here in Yucatan did he ever have any energy. The climate was enervating. No wonder it was that servants and people slept away the warmer hours. Crossing the broad stone court and the spacious outside hall, Montes entered the dim, dark, musty parlors and passed through to the patio.

Here all was colorful luxuriance of grass and flower and palm, great still ferns and trailing vines. It was not cool, but shady and moist. Only a soft spray of falling water and a humming of bees disturbed the deep silence. The place seemed drowned in sweet fragrance, rich and subtle, thickening the air so that it was difficult to breathe. In a bower roofed by roses lay Senorita Mendoza, asleep in a hammock.

Softly Montes made his way to her side and stood looking down at her. As a picture, as something feminine, beautiful and young and soft and fresh and alluring, asleep and therefore sincere, she seemed all that was desirable. Dolores Mendoza was an unusual type for a Yucatecan of Spanish descent. She was blond. Her hair was not golden, yet nearly so; she had a broad, low, beautiful brow, with level eyebrows, and the effect of her closed lids was fascinating with their promise; her nose was small, straight,

piquant, with delicate nostrils that showed they could quiver and dilate; her mouth, the best feature of her beauty, was as red as the roses that drooped over her, and its short curved upper lip seemed full, sweet, sensuous. She had the oval face of her class, but fair, not olive-skinned, and her chin, though it did not detract from her charms, was far from being strong. Perhaps her greatest attraction, seen thus in the slumber of abandon, was her slender form, round-limbed and graceful.

Montes gazed at her until he felt a bitterness of revolt against the deceit of Nature. She gladdened all the senses of man. But somehow she seemed false to the effect she created. If he watched her long in this beautiful guise of sleep he would deaden his intelligence. She was not for him. So he pulled a red rose and pushed it against her lips, playfully tapping them until she awoke. Her eyes unclosed. They were a surprise. They should have been blue, but they were tawny. Sleepy, dreamy, wonderful cat eyes they were, clear and soft, windows of the truth of her nature. Montes suddenly felt safe again, sure of himself,

"Ah, Senor Montes," she said. "You found me asleep. How long have you been here?"

"A long time, I think," he replied, as he seated himself on a bench near her hammock. "Watching you asleep, I forgot time. But alas! time flies — and you awoke."

Dolores laughed. She had perfect white teeth that looked made to bite and enjoy biting. Her smile added to her charm.

Sir, one would think you liked me best asleep."
I do. You are always beautiful, Dolores. But when you are asleep you seem sincere. Now you are — Dolores Mendoza."

"Who is sincere? You are not," she retorted. "I don't know you any more. You seem to try to make me dissatisfied with myself."
So you ought to be."

Why? Because I cannot run away with you to Brazil?"

"No. Because you look like an angel but are not one. Because your beauty, your charm, your sweetness deceive men. You seem the incarnation of love and joy."

"Ah!" she cried, stretching out her round arms and drawing a deep breath that swelled her white neck. "You are jealous. But I am happy. I have what I want. I am young and I enjoy. I love to be admired. I love to be loved. I love jewels, gowns, all I have, pleasure, excitement, music, flowers. I love to eat. I love to be idle, lazy, dreamy. I love to sleep. And you, horrid man, awake me to make me think."

"That is impossible, Dolores," he replied. "You cannot think."

"My mind works pretty well. But I'll admit I'm a little animal — a tawny-eyed cat. So, Montes, you must stroke me the right way or I will scratch."

"Well, I'd rather you scratched," said Montes. "A man likes a woman who loves him tenderly and passionately one moment and tears his hair out the next."

"You know, of course, sefior," she replied mockingly. "The little Alva girl, for instance. You admired her. Perhaps she — "

"She is adorable," he returned complacently. "I go to her for consolation."

Dolores made a sharp passionate gesture, a contrast to her usual languorous movements. Into the sleepy, tawny eyes shot a dilating fire.

"Have you made love to her?" she demanded.

"Dolores, do you imagine any man could resist that girl?" he rejoined.

"Have you?" she repeated with heaving breast.

Montes discarded his tantalizing lightness. "No, Dolores, I have not. I have lived in a torment lately. My love for you seems turning to hate."

"No!" she cried, extending her hands. She softened. Her lips parted. If there were depths in her, Montes had sounded them.

"Dolores, tell me the truth," he said, taking her hands. "You have never been true."

"I am true to my family. They chose Perez for me to marry — before I ever knew you. It is settled. I shall marry him. But — "

"But! Dolores, you love me?"

She drooped her head. "Yes, senor — lately it has come to that. Ah! Don't — don't! Montes, I beg of you! You forget — I'm engaged to Perez."

Montes released her. In her confession and resistance there was proof of his injustice. She was no nobler than her class. She was a butterfly in her fancies, a little cat in her greedy joy of physical life. But in her agitation he saw a deeper spirit.

"Dolores, if I had come first — before Perez — would you have given yourself to me?" he asked.

Ah, senor, with all my heart!" she replied softly. Dearest — I think I must ask you to forgive me for — for something I can't confess. And now tell me — this reception given to-morrow by your mother — is that to announce your engagement to Perez?"

"Yes and I will be free then till fall — when — when — "

"When you will be married?"

She bowed assent and hesitatingly slid a white hand toward him.

"Fall! It's a long time. Dolores, I must go back to Brazil."

Ah, sefior, that will kill me! Stay!" she entreated. But it would be dangerous. Perez dislikes me. I hate him. Something terrible might come of it."

"That is his risk. I have consented to marry him. I will do my duty before and after. But I see no reason why I may not have a little happiness — of my own — until that day comes. Life for me will not contain all I could wish. I told you; now I am happy. But you were included. Sefior, if you love me you will remain."

"Dolores, can you think we will not suffer more?" he asked.

"I know we will afterward. But we shall not now."

"Now is perilous to me. To realize you love me! I did not think you capable of it. Listen! Something — something might prevent your marriage — or happen afterward. All — all is so uncertain."

"Quien sabe?" she whispered; and to the tawny, sleepy languor of her eyes there came a fancy, a dream, a mystic hope.

"Dolores, if Perez were lost to you — one way or another — would you marry me?" he broke out huskily. Not until then had he asked her hand in marriage.

"If such forlorn hope will make you stay — make you happy — yes, Senor Montes," was her answer.

There came a time when Yaqui was needed in the factory where the henequen fiber was extracted from the leaves. He had come to be a valuable machine — an instrument of toil that did not run down or go wrong. One guard said to another: "That big black peon takes a lot of killing!" and then ceased to watch him closely. He might have escaped. He might have crossed the miles and miles of henequen fields to the jungle, and under that dense cover had made his way northward to the coast. Yaqui had many a chance. But he never looked toward the north.

At first they put him to feeding henequen leaves into the maw of a crushing machine. The juicy, sticky, odorous substance of the big twenty -pound leaf was squeezed into a pulp, out of which came the white glistening threads of fiber. These fibers made sisal rope — rope second in quality only to the manila.

By and by he was promoted. They put him in the pressing room to work on the ponderous iron press which was used to make the henequen bales. This machine was a high, strange-looking object, oblong in shape, like a box, opening in the middle from the top down. It had several distinct movements, all operated by levers. Long bundles of henequen were carried in from the racks and laid in the press until it was half full. Then a lever was pulled, the machine closed on the fiber and opened again. This operation was repeated again and again. Then it was necessary for the operator to step from his platform upon the fiber in the machine and stamp it down and jump upon it and press it closely all round.

When this had been done the last time the machine seemed wide open and stuffed so full that it would never close. But when the lever was pulled the ponderous steel jaws shut closer and closer and locked. Then the sides fell away, to disclose a great smooth bale of henequen ready for shipment.

The Yaqui learned to operate this press so skillfully that the work was left to him. When his carriers went out to the racks for more fiber he was left alone in the room.

Some strange relation sprang up between Yaqui and his fiber press. For him it never failed to operate. He knew to a strand just how much fiber made a perfect bale. And he became so accurate that his bales were never weighed. They came out glistening, white, perfect to the pound. There was a strange affinity between this massive, steel-jawed engine and something that lived in the Yaqui's heart, implacable and immutable, appalling in its strength to wait, in its power to crush.

IV

THERE seemed no failing of the endurance of this primitive giant, but his great frame had wasted away until it was a mere hulk. Owing to his value now to the hacienda, Yaqui was given rations in lieu of the ball of soggy bread; they were not, however, what the Indian needed. Montes at last won Yaqui's gratitude.

"Señor, if Yaqui wanted to eat it would be meat he needed," said the chief. Then Montes added meat to the wine, bread, and fruit he secretly brought to the Indian.

When Montes began covert kindnesses to the poor Yaqui slaves the chief showed gratitude and pathos : " Señor Montes is good — but the sun of the Yaquis is setting."

Perez in his triumphant arrogance evidently derived pleasure from being magnanimous to the man he instinctively knew was his rival.

One day at the hacienda when Montes rode up to meet Donna Isabel and Dolores he found them accompanied by Perez and his parents. Almost immediately the young officer suggested gayly:

"Señor, pray carry Dolores off somewhere. My father has something to plan with Donna Isabel. It must be a secret from Dolores. Take her a walk — talk to her, señor

— keep her excited — make love to her!"

"I shall be happy to obey. Will you come, senorita?" 5
said Montes.

If they expected Dolores to pout, they were mistaken. Her slow, sleepy glance left the face of her future husband as she turned away silently to accompany Montes. They walked along the palm-shaded road, out toward the huge, open, sunny space that was the henequen domain.

"I hate Perez," she burst out suddenly. "He meant to taunt you. He thinks I am his slave — a creature without mind or heart. Senor, make love to me!"

"You will be his slave — soon," whispered Montes bitterly.

"Never!" she exclaimed passionately.

They readied the end of the shady road. The mill was silent. Montes saw the Indian standing motionless close at hand, in the shade of the henequen racks.

"Dolores, did you mean what you just said?" asked Montes eagerly.

"That I will never be Perez's slave?"

"No; the other thing you said. 9 "

"Yes, I did," she replied. "Make love to me, senor. It was his wish. I must learn to obey."

With sullen scorn she spoke, not looking at Montes, scarcely realizing the actual purport of her speech. But when Montes took her in his arms she started back with a cry. He held her. And suddenly clasping her tightly he bent his head to kiss the red lips she opened to protest.

"Let me go!" she begged wildly. "Oh — I did not — mean — Montes, not so! Do not make me — "

"Kiss me!" whispered Montes hoarsely, "or I'll never let you go. It was his wish. Come, I dare you — I beg you!"

One wild moment she responded to his kiss, and then she thrust him away.

"Ah, by the saints!" she murmured with hands over her face. "Now I will love you more — my heart will break."

"Dolores, I can't let Perez have you," declared Montes miserably.

"Too late, my dear. I am to be his wife."

"But you love me, Dolores?"

"Alas! too true. I do. Oh, I never knew how well!" she cried.

"Let us run away," he implored eagerly.

Mournfully she shook her head, and looking up suddenly she espied the Yaqui. His great burning cavernous eyes, like black fire, were fixed upon her.

"Oh, that terrible Yaqui," she whispered. "It is he who watches us at the bull fights — Let us go, Montes — Oh, he saw us — he saw me — Come!"

Upon their return to the house the old Don greeted them effusively. He seemed radiant with happiness. He had united two of the first families of Yucatan, which unison would make the greatest henequen plantation. The beautiful sefiorita had other admirers. But this marriage had unusual advantages. The peculiar location and productiveness of the plantations and the obstacles to greater and quicker output that would be done away with, and the fact that Lieutenant Perez through his military influence could work the fields with peon labor — these facts had carried the balance in favor of the marriage. The old Don manifestly regarded the arrangement as a victory for him which he owed to the henequen, and he had decided to make the wedding day one on which the rich product of the plantation should play a most important part.

"But how to bring in the henequen!" he concluded in perplexity. "I've racked my brain. Son, I leave it to you."

Young Perez magnificently waved the question aside. Possessing himself of his fiancée's reluctant hand, he spoke in a whisper audible to Montes. "We planned the wedding presents. That was the secret. But you shall not see — not know — until we are married!"

Montes dropped his eyes and his brow knit thoughtfully. Later, as a peon brought his horse, he called Perez aside.

"I've an idea," he said confidentially. "Have Yaqui select the most perfect henequen fiber to make the most beautiful and perfect bale of henequen ever pressed. Have Yaqui place the wedding presents inside the bale before the final pressing. Then send it to Donna Isabel's house after the wedding and open it there."

Young Perez clapped his hands in delight. What a capital plan! He complimented Montes and thanked him and asked him to keep secret the idea. Indeed, the young lieutenant waxed enthusiastic over the plan. It would be unique; it would be fitting to the occasion. Perez would have Yaqui pick over and select from the racks the most perfect fibers, to be laid aside. Perez would go himself to watch Yaqui at his work. He would have Yaqui practice the operation of pressing, so at the momentous hour there could be no hitch. And on the wedding day Perez would carry the presents himself. No hands but his own would be trusted with those jewels, especially the exquisite pearls that were his own particular gift.

At last the day arrived for the wedding. It was to be a holiday. Yaqui alone was not to lie idle. It was to fall to him to press that bale of henequen and to haul it to the bride's home.

But Perez did not receive all his gifts when he wanted them. Messengers arrived late and some were yet to come. He went to the mill, however, and put Yaqui to work at packing the henequen in the press and building it up. The Indian was bidden to go so far with the bale, leaving a great hole in the middle for the gifts and to have the rest of the fiber all ready to pack and press. Perez would not trust anyone else with his precious secret; he himself would hurry down with the gifts, and secretly, for the manner of presentation was to be a great surprise.

Blue was the sky, white gold the sun, and the breeze waved the palms. But for Montes an invisible shadow hovered over the stately Mendoza mansion where Dolores was to be made a bride. The shadow existed in his mind and took mystic shape — now a vast, copper-hazed, green-spiked plain of henequen, and then the spectral gigantic shape of a toiling man, gaunt, grim, and fire-eyed.

Montes hid his heavy heart behind smiling lips and the speech of a courtier. He steeled himself against a nameless and portending shock, waiting for it even when his mind scorned the delusion. But the shock did not come at sight of Senorita Dolores, magnificently gowned in white, beautiful, serene, imperious, with her proud, tawny eyes and proud, red lips. Nor when those sleepy strange eyes met his. Nor when the priest ended the ceremony that made her a wife.

He noted when Lieutenant Perez laughingly fought his way out of the crowd and disappeared. Then the unrest of Montes became a haunting suspense.

By and by the guests were directed out to the shaded west terrace, where in the center of the wide stoned space lay a huge white glistening bale of henequen. Beside it stood the giant Yaqui, dark, motionless, aloof. The guests clustered round.

When Montes saw the Yaqui like a statue beside the bale of henequen, he sustained the shock for which he had been waiting. He slipped to the front of the circle of guests.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old Don, eying the bale of henequen with great satisfaction. "This is the surprise our son had in store for us. Here is the jewel case — here are the wedding presents!"

The guests laughed and murmured their compliments.

"Where is Senor Perez?" demanded the Don as he looked round.

"The boy is hiding," replied Donna Isabel. "He wants to watch his bride when she sees the gifts."

"No — he would not be there," declared the old Don in perplexity. Something strange edged into his gladness of the moment. Suddenly he wheeled to the Yaqui. But he never spoke the question on his lips. Slowly he seemed to be blasted by those great black-fired orbs, as piercing as if they had been lightnings from hell.

"Hurry, open the bale," cried the bride, her sweet voice trilling above the gay talk.

Yaqui appeared not to hear. Was he looking into the soul of the father of Lieutenant Perez? All about him be-

trayed almost a superhuman intensity.

"Open the bale," ordered the bride.

Yaqui cut the wire. He did not look at her. The perfectly folded and pressed strands of fiber shook and swelled and moved apart as if in relief. And like a great white jewel case of glistening silken threads the bale of henequen opened.

It commanded a stilling of the gay murmur — a sudden silence that had a subtle effect upon all. The beautiful bride, leaning closer to look, seemed to lose the light of the tawny proud eyes. Her mother froze into a creature of stone. The old Don, in slow strange action, as if his mind had feeble sway over body, bent his gray head away from the gaunt and terrible Yaqui. Something showed blue down under the center strands of the glistening fiber. With a swift flash of his huge black hand, with exceeding violence, Yaqui swept the strands aside. Then from his lips pealed an awful cry. Instead of the jewels, there, crushed and ghastly, lay the bridegroom Perez.

1 Recently the Mexican government changed its policy toward peon labor in Yucatan, and the Yaquis in Sonora. These Indians are now in the regular Mexican army. [Author's Note.]

THE GRIZZLY KITTENS

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Freaks of Mayfair*, by E. F. Benson

A fount of perennial youthfulness has been and will be the blessing and curse of certain people's existence. Up to the age of about thirty-five for a woman and round about forty for a man, it is an admirable thing to feel that the morning of life is still lingering in rosy cloudlets about you, but when these austere ages have been arrived at, it is wiser for those who still behave like imperishable children to recollect, impossible though they will find the realisation of it without exercising patience and determination, that, though their immortal souls are doubtless imperishable, they are no longer boys and girls. Otherwise the dreadful fate of becoming grizzly kittens will soon lay ambushes for them, and to be a grizzly kitten does not produce at all the same impression as being an imperishable child. Like Erin in the song and King David in the psalm, they should remember and consider the days of old, and attempt quietly and constantly to do a little subtraction sum, whereby they will ascertain how far the days of old have receded from them. Their spring-tide has ebbed a long way since then: they are swimming in it no longer, they are not even paddling, but they are standing just a little gaunt and skinny high up on the beach, with wisps of dry sea-weed whistling round their emaciated ankles. Almost invariably those threatened with grizzly kittenhood are spare and thin, for this fact encourages the pathetic delusion that they have youthful figures, and in a dim light, to eyes that are losing their early pitilessness of vision they doubtless seem slim and youthful to themselves, though they rarely present this appearance to each other. But it is very uncommon to find a stout grizzly kitten: amplitude makes it impossible to skip about, and cannot be so readily mistaken by its hopeful possessors for youthful slimness.

Imperishable children, who are threatened with grizzly kittenhood, are, like other children and kittens, male and female. At this stage great indulgence must be extended to them whichever their sex may be, for their error is based upon vitality, which, however misapplied, is in itself the most attractive quality in the world. That they have no sense of time is in comparison a smaller consideration. For they are always cheerful, always optimistic, and if, at the age of forty, they have a slight tendency to say that events of twenty years ago are shrouded in the mists of childhood and the nursery, this is but an amiable failing, and one that is far easier to overlook than many of the more angular virtues. Of the two the female grizzly kitten (in the early stages of the complaint) is entitled to greater kindness than her grizzly brother, for the obvious reason that in the fair of Mayfair the merry-go-round and the joy-wheel slow down for women sooner than they do for men. Thus the temptation to a woman of behaving as if it was not

slowing down, is greater than to a man. It will go on longer for him; he has less excuse--since he has had a longer joy-ride--for pretending that it is still quite at its height of revolving giddiness. She--if she is gifted with the amazing vitality which animates grizzly kittens--can hardly help still screaming and clapping her hands and changing hats, when first the hurdy-gurdy and the whirling begin to slacken, in order to persuade herself that they are doing nothing of the sort. If she is wise, she will of course slip off the joy-wheel and, like Mr. Wordsworth, 'only find strength in what remains behind.' But if she did that, the danger of her grizzly kittenhood would be over. Pity her then, when first the slowing-down process begins, but give less pity to the man who will not accept the comparatively kinder burden of his middle-age. Besides, when the early stages of grizzly kittenhood are past, the woman who still clings to her skippings and her rheumatic antics after blind-tassels has so much the harder gymnastics to perform.

Two sad concrete examples of grizzly-kittenhood, both in advanced stages, await our commiseration. Mrs. Begum (née Adeline Armstrong) is the first. From her childhood the world conspired to make a grizzly kitten of her, and in direct contravention of the expressed wishes of her godfather and godmother who said she was to be Adeline, insisted on calling her Baby. Baby Armstrong she accordingly remained until the age of twenty-five, when she became Baby Begum, and she never got further from that odious appellation, at her present age of fifty-two, than being known as Babs, while even now her mother, herself the grizzliest of all existing kittens, calls her Baby still.

Babs appeared in Mayfair at the age of seventeen, and instantly took the town by storm, in virtue of her authentic and audacious vitality. She had the face of a Sir Joshua Reynolds angel, the figure of a Botticelli one, the tongue of a gamin, and the spirits of an everlasting carnival. Her laugh, the very sound of that delicious enjoyment, set the drawing-room in a roar, and her conversation the smoking-room, where she was quite at home--there was never anyone so complete as she, never such an apple of attractiveness, of which all could have a slice. She would ride in the Row of a morning, call the policeman, who wanted to take her name on the score of excessive velocity, 'Arthur dear,' and remind him how she had danced in the cause of police old-age pensions at Clerkenwell (which was perfectly true), thus melting his austere heart. Then, as like as not, she would get off her horse at the far end of the ladies' mile, and put on it an exhausted governess, with orders to the groom to see her safe home to Bayswater. Then she would sit on the rail, ask a passer-by for a cigarette, and hold a little court of adorers, male and female alike, until her horse came back again. She would, in rare intervals of fatigue, go to bed about four o'clock in the morning, when her mother was giving a ball in Prince's Gate, and stand on the balcony outside her bedroom in her nightgown, and talk to the remaining guests as they left the house, shrieking good wishes, and blowing kisses. Or if the fit so took her, instead of going to bed she would

change her ball-dress for a riding-habit, go down to the mews with Charlie or Tommy or Harry, or indeed with Bertha or Florrie or Madge (fitting these latter up with other habits) and start for a ride in the break of the summer morning, returning hungry and dewy to breakfast. Wherever she went the world laughed with her; she enhaloed all she shone upon. Chiefly did she shine upon Charlie Gordon, who, in the measure of a man, was a like comet to herself. He was some five years older than she, and they expected to marry each other when the fun became less fast and furious. In the interval, among other things, they had a swimming-race across the Serpentine one early August morning, and she won by two lengths. An angry Humane Society boat jabbed at them with hooks in order to rescue them. These they evaded.

Those whom Nature threatens with grizzly kittenhood live too much on the surface to be able to spare much energy for such engrossing habits as falling in love, and when, at the age of twenty-five she suddenly determined to marry the small and silent Mr. Begum, nobody was surprised and many applauded. She could not go on swimming the Serpentine with Charlie Gordon, and it seemed equally unimaginable that she should marry a man with only £2000 a year and no prospects of any sort or kind. She did not imperatively want him, any more than he imperatively wanted her, and since that one conclusive reason for matrimony was absent, it did not particularly matter whom she married, so long as he was immensely wealthy, and of an indulgent temper. By nationality, Mr. Begum owed about equal debts to Palestine, Poland, and the Barbados, and since at this epoch, Palestine at any rate was in the ascendant over the roofs of Mayfair it was thought highly suitable that Baby Armstrong should become Baby Begum. She had always called Charlie Gordon, 'dear,' or 'darling,' or 'fool,' and she explained it all to him in the most illuminating manner.

'Darling, you quite understand, don't you?' she said, as she rode beside him one morning in the Park. 'Jehoshaphat's a perfect dear, and he suits me. Life isn't all beer and skittles, otherwise I would buy some beer, and you would save up to get a second-hand skittle alley, and there we should be! My dear, do look at that thing on the chestnut coming down this way. Is it a goat or isn't it? I think it's a goat. Oh don't be a fool, dear, you needn't be a fool. Of course everybody thought we were going to marry each other, but what can matter less than what everybody thinks? And besides, I know quite well that you haven't the slightest intention of getting broken-hearted about me, and the only thing you mind about it is that I have shown I have not got a broken heart about you. What really is of importance is what I am to call Jehoshaphat. I can't call him Jehu, because he doesn't do anything furiously, and I can't call him "Fat," because he's thin, and there's nothing left!'

'I should call him "darling," then,' said Charlie, who was still unconvinced by this flagrant philosophy, 'same as you call me.'

She looked at him almost regretfully.

‘Oh, do be sensible,’ she said. ‘I know I’m right: I feel I’m right. Get another girl. There are lots of them, you know.’

Charlie had the most admirable temper.

‘I’ll take your advice,’ he said. ‘And, anyhow, I wish you the best of luck. I hope you’ll be rippingly happy. Come on, let’s have a gallop.’

Since then, years, as impatient novelists so often inform us, passed. Babs’s philosophy of life was excellent as far as it went, and the only objection to it was that it did not go far enough. In spite of his vitality, Charlie did not, as a sensible young man should, see about getting another girl; for perhaps he was wounded a little deeper than either he or Babs knew. The tragedy about it all is that they both had the constitution of grizzly

[Illustration: _The Grizzly Kittens._]

kittens. He did not marry any one else, nor did he live into his age as that slowly increased upon him, and Mr. Begum got asthma. This made him very tiresome and wheezy, and the perpetual contact with senility probably prevented Babs from growing into her proper mould of increasing years. Her sense of youth was constantly fed by her husband’s venerable habits; with him she always felt a girl. And the ruthless decades proceeded in their Juggernaut march, without her ever seeing the toppling car that now overhangs her, stiff with the wooden images of age. Wooden, at any rate, they will seem to her when she fully perceives them, and robbed of the graciousness and wisdom that might have clothed and softened them if only she had admitted their advent.

As it is, two pathetic figures confront us. Charlie Gordon, that slim entrancing youth, is just as slim (in fact slimmer in the wrong places) as he ever was. But he is a shade less entrancing, with his mincing entry into the assembling party than he was twenty-five years ago. There was no need for him to mince then, for his eager footsteps carried him, as with Hermes-heels, on the wings of youth. Now he takes little quick steps, and thinks it is the same thing. He is just as light and spry as ever (except when he is troubled with lumbago) but he cannot see that it is not the same thing. He has not noticed that his lean youthful jaw has a queer little fold in the side of it, and if he notices it, he thinks it is a dimple. He brushes his hair very carefully now, not knowing that to the disinterested observer the top of his head looks rather like music-paper, with white gaps in between the lines, and that it is quite obvious that he grows those thinning locks very long on one side of his head (just above the ear) and trains them in the manner of an espaliered pear over the denuded bone where once a plume used jauntily to erect itself. He is careful about them now, but once, not so very long ago, he

forgot how delicately trained were those tresses, and went down to bathe with the other boys of the house. They naturally came detached from their proper place, and streamed after him as he swam, like the locks of a Rhine-maiden. It was rather terrible. But such as they are, they are still glossy raven black: there is not the smallest hint of grey anywhere about them.

Again, once in days of old he had quick staccato little movements of his head, like some young wild animal, which suited the swiftness of his mercurial gambollings very well; to this day that particular habit has persisted, but the effect of it somehow is dismally changed; it is galvanic and vaguely suggests St. Vitus's abominable dance. He still jumps about with joy when he is pleased, but those skippings resemble rather the antics of a marionette than coltish friskings. He feels young, at least he has that quenchless appetite for pleasure that is characteristic of the young, but he isn't young, and his tragedy, the rôle of the grizzly kitten, stares him in the face. Perhaps he will never perceive it himself, and go on as usual, slightly less agile owing to the increasing stiffness of his venerable joints, until the days of his sojourning here are ended. Or perhaps he will see it, and after a rather depressing week or two turn into a perfectly charming old man with a bald head and spectacles and a jolly laugh.

Mrs. Begum's fate hangs in the balance also. She has begun to think it rather daring of her to go larking about with a boy who is easily young enough to be her son, whereas in the days when such manoeuvres were rather daring she never gave two thoughts to them. She still likes (or pretends to like) sitting up to the end of a ball, not in the least realizing how appalling a spectacle she presents in the light of a June dawn. She can easily be persuaded to tuck up her skirts and dance the tango or the fox-trot or whatever it is that engages the attention of the next generation, and if she wants to sit down, she is as likely as not to flop cross-legged on the floor, or to perch herself on a friend's knee, with a cigarette in one hand and a glass of champagne cup in the other, and tell slightly risky stories, such as amused the partners of her youth. But for all her wavings of her wand, the spell does not work nowadays, and when poor Babs begins to be naughty, it is kinder of her friends to go away. Kitten-like she jumps at the blind-tassel still, but it is weary, heavy work, and she creaks, she creaks....

But the most degrading exhibition of all is when Babs and Charlie get together. Then in order to show, each to each, that time writes no wrinkles on their azure brows, they give a miserable display of mature skittishness. They see which of them can scream loudest, laugh most, eat most, drink most, romp most, and, in a word, be grizzliest. Their manner of speech has not changed in the smallest degree in the lapse of thirty years, and to the young people about it sounds like some strange and outlandish tongue such as was current in the reign of the second George. They are always betraying themselves, too, by whistling 'Two

Lovely Black Eyes' or some ditty belonging to the dark ages, and to correct themselves pretend that their mother taught it them when she came to kiss them good-night in their cribs. They do not deceive anybody else by their jumpings, they do not deceive each other, and perhaps they do not deceive themselves. But it is as if a curse was on them: they have got to be dewy and Maylike: if Charlie wants a book from the far end of the room he runs to get it; when they go into dinner together they probably slide along the parquet floor. He is a little deaf, and pretending to hear all that is said, makes the most idiotic replies; and she is a little blind, and cannot possibly read the papers without spectacles, which she altogether refuses to wear. If only they had married each other thirty years ago they would probably have mellowed a little, or at least could have told each other how ridiculous they were being. As it is, they both have to screw themselves up to the key of the time when they swam the Serpentine together. Poor dear old frauds, why do they try to wrench themselves up to concert pitch still? Such a concert pitch! such strainings and bat-like squeaks! It would be so much better to get a little flat and fluffy, on the grounds of greater comfort to themselves, not to mention motives of humanity to others. For, indeed, they are rather a ghastly sight, dabbling and squawking at each other on the sofa, in memory of days long ago. The young folk only wonder who those 'funny old buffers' are, and they wonder even more when the funny old buffers insist on joining in a game of fives on the billiard-table, and the room resounds with bony noises as their hands hit the flying ball. But they scream in earnest then, because it does really hurt them very much. And then Mr. Begum gets wheeled in in his invalid chair with his rugs and his foot-warmers, and insists on talking to Charlie Gordon when the game is over (and his hands feel as if they had been bastinadoed), as if he was really an elderly man, and can remember the Franco-German war, which of course he can. But Charlie, though he stoutly denies the imputation, feels very uncomfortable, and changes the subject at the earliest opportunity. By this time Babs will have organized a game of rounders or something violent in the garden, in order to show that she is young too. She is getting very nut-crackery, and looks tired and haggard, as indeed she is. But she shouts to her husband, who is much deafer than Charlie, 'Daddy, darling, we're going to play rounders! Would you like to come out, or do you think it will be rather cold for you? Perhaps you'd be wiser not to. You won't play, I suppose, Charlie?'

And Charlie, nursing his bruised hands, says, 'Rounders? Bless me, yes. I'm not quite past rounders yet. Nothing like a good run-about game to keep you fit.'

It keeps him so fit that he is compelled to have a good stiff brandy and soda afterwards, to tone him up for the exertion of having dinner.

Wearily, aching in every limb, they creep into their respective beds. There seems to be a pillow-fight going on somewhere at the end of the

passage, with really young voices shrieking, and the swift pad of light feet. Babs thinks of joining it, but her fingers fall from the pillow she had caught up, and she gets into bed instead, thinking she will be up to anything after a good night. And she would be up to anything that could decently be required of her, if only she would not present her grim and dauntless figure at such excursions. Already Charlie is dropping into a sleep of utter prostration: he wants to be in good trim to-morrow. There he lies with his thin Rhine-maiden hair reposing on his pillow. But he wakes easily, though slightly deaf, and at the first rattle of his door-handle when his valet calls him next morning he will instinctively gather it up over his poor bald pate.

And they might both be so comfortable and jolly and suitable. There is a wounding pathos about them both.

GOOD-BYE, JACK

from the Project Gutenberg etext of *The House of Pride*, by Jack London

Hawaii is a queer place. Everything socially is what I may call topsy-turvy. Not but what things are correct. They are almost too much so. But still things are sort of upside down. The most ultra-exclusive set there is the "Missionary Crowd." It comes with rather a shock to learn that in Hawaii the obscure martyrdom-seeking missionary sits at the head of the table of the moneyed aristocracy. But it is true. The humble New Englanders who came out in the third decade of the nineteenth century, came for the lofty purpose of teaching the kanakas the true religion, the worship of the one only genuine and undeniable God. So well did they succeed in this, and also in civilizing the kanaka, that by the second or third generation he was practically extinct. This being the fruit of the seed of the Gospel, the fruit of the seed of the missionaries (the sons and the grandsons) was the possession of the islands themselves,--of the land, the ports, the town sites, and the sugar plantations: The missionary who came to give the bread of life remained to gobble up the whole heathen feast.

But that is not the Hawaiian queerness I started out to tell. Only one cannot speak of things Hawaiian without mentioning the missionaries. There is Jack Kersdale, the man I wanted to tell about; he came of missionary stock. That is, on his grandmother's side. His grandfather was old Benjamin Kersdale, a Yankee trader, who got his start for a million in the old days by selling cheap whiskey and square-face gin. There's another queer thing. The old missionaries and old traders were mortal enemies. You see, their interests conflicted. But their children made it up by intermarrying and dividing the island between them.

Life in Hawaii is a song. That's the way Stoddard put it in his "Hawaii Noi":--

"Thy life is music--Fate the notes prolong!
Each isle a stanza, and the whole a song."

And he was right. Flesh is golden there. The native women are sun-ripe Junos, the native men bronzed Apollos. They sing, and dance, and all are flower-bejewelled and flower-crowned. And, outside the rigid "Missionary Crowd," the white men yield to the climate and the sun, and no matter how busy they may be, are prone to dance and sing and wear flowers behind their ears and in their hair. Jack Kersdale was one of these fellows. He was one of the busiest men I ever met. He was a several-times millionaire. He was a sugar-king, a coffee planter, a rubber pioneer, a cattle rancher, and a promoter of three out of every four new enterprises launched in the islands. He was a society man, a club man, a yachtsman, a bachelor, and withal as handsome a man as was ever doted upon by mammas

with marriageable daughters. Incidentally, he had finished his education at Yale, and his head was crammed fuller with vital statistics and scholarly information concerning Hawaii Nei than any other islander I ever encountered. He turned off an immense amount of work, and he sang and danced and put flowers in his hair as immensely as any of the idlers. He had grit, and had fought two duels--both, political--when he was no more than a raw youth essaying his first adventures in politics. In fact, he played a most creditable and courageous part in the last revolution, when the native dynasty was overthrown; and he could not have been over sixteen at the time. I am pointing out that he was no coward, in order that you may appreciate what happens later on. I've seen him in the breaking yard at the Haleakala Ranch, conquering a four-year-old brute that for two years had defied the pick of Von Tempsky's cow-boys. And I must tell of one other thing. It was down in Kona,--or up, rather, for the Kona people scorn to live at less than a thousand feet elevation. We were all on the lanai of Doctor Goodhue's bungalow. I was talking with Dottie Fairchild when it happened. A big centipede--it was seven inches, for we measured it afterwards--fell from the rafters overhead squarely into her coiffure. I confess, the hideousness of it paralysed me. I couldn't move. My mind refused to work. There, within two feet of me, the ugly venomous devil was writhing in her hair. It threatened at any moment to fall down upon her exposed shoulders--we had just come out from dinner.

"What is it?" she asked, starting to raise her hand to her head.

"Don't!" I cried. "Don't!"

"But what is it?" she insisted, growing frightened by the fright she read in my eyes and on my stammering lips.

My exclamation attracted Kersdale's attention. He glanced our way carelessly, but in that glance took in everything. He came over to us, but without haste.

"Please don't move, Dottie," he said quietly.

He never hesitated, nor did he hurry and make a bungle of it.

"Allow me," he said.

And with one hand he caught her scarf and drew it tightly around her shoulders so that the centipede could not fall inside her bodice. With the other hand--the right--he reached into her hair, caught the repulsive abomination as near as he was able by the nape of the neck, and held it tightly between thumb and forefinger as he withdrew it from her hair. It was as horrible and heroic a sight as man could wish to see. It made my flesh crawl. The centipede, seven inches of squirming legs, writhed and twisted and dashed itself about his hand, the body twining around the

fingers and the legs digging into the skin and scratching as the beast endeavoured to free itself. It bit him twice--I saw it--though he assured the ladies that he was not harmed as he dropped it upon the walk and stamped it into the gravel. But I saw him in the surgery five minutes afterwards, with Doctor Goodhue scarifying the wounds and injecting permanganate of potash. The next morning Kersdale's arm was as big as a barrel, and it was three weeks before the swelling went down.

All of which has nothing to do with my story, but which I could not avoid giving in order to show that Jack Kersdale was anything but a coward. It was the cleanest exhibition of grit I have ever seen. He never turned a hair. The smile never left his lips. And he dived with thumb and forefinger into Dottie Fairchild's hair as gaily as if it had been a box of salted almonds. Yet that was the man I was destined to see stricken with a fear a thousand times more hideous even than the fear that was mine when I saw that writhing abomination in Dottie Fairchild's hair, dangling over her eyes and the trap of her bodice.

I was interested in leprosy, and upon that, as upon every other island subject, Kersdale had encyclopedic knowledge. In fact, leprosy was one of his hobbies. He was an ardent defender of the settlement at Molokai, where all the island lepers were segregated. There was much talk and feeling among the natives, fanned by the demagogues, concerning the cruelties of Molokai, where men and women, not alone banished from friends and family, were compelled to live in perpetual imprisonment until they died. There were no reprieves, no commutations of sentences. "Abandon hope" was written over the portal of Molokai.

"I tell you they are happy there," Kersdale insisted. "And they are infinitely better off than their friends and relatives outside who have nothing the matter with them. The horrors of Molokai are all poppycock. I can take you through any hospital or any slum in any of the great cities of the world and show you a thousand times worse horrors. The living death! The creatures that once were men! Bosh! You ought to see those living deaths racing horses on the Fourth of July. Some of them own boats. One has a gasoline launch. They have nothing to do but have a good time. Food, shelter, clothes, medical attendance, everything, is theirs. They are the wards of the Territory. They have a much finer climate than Honolulu, and the scenery is magnificent. I shouldn't mind going down there myself for the rest of my days. It is a lovely spot."

So Kersdale on the joyous leper. He was not afraid of leprosy. He said so himself, and that there wasn't one chance in a million for him or any other white man to catch it, though he confessed afterward that one of his school chums, Alfred Starter, had contracted it, gone to Molokai, and there died.

"You know, in the old days," Kersdale explained, "there was no certain test for leprosy. Anything unusual or abnormal was sufficient to send a

fellow to Molokai. The result was that dozens were sent there who were no more lepers than you or I. But they don't make that mistake now. The Board of Health tests are infallible. The funny thing is that when the test was discovered they immediately went down to Molokai and applied it, and they found a number who were not lepers. These were immediately deported. Happy to get away? They wailed harder at leaving the settlement than when they left Honolulu to go to it. Some refused to leave, and really had to be forced out. One of them even married a leper woman in the last stages and then wrote pathetic letters to the Board of Health, protesting against his expulsion on the ground that no one was so well able as he to take care of his poor old wife."

"What is this infallible test?" I demanded.

"The bacteriological test. There is no getting away from it. Doctor Hervey--he's our expert, you know--was the first man to apply it here. He is a wizard. He knows more about leprosy than any living man, and if a cure is ever discovered, he'll be that discoverer. As for the test, it is very simple. They have succeeded in isolating the _bacillus leprae_ and studying it. They know it now when they see it. All they do is to snip a bit of skin from the suspect and subject it to the bacteriological test. A man without any visible symptoms may be chock full of the leprosy bacilli."

"Then you or I, for all we know," I suggested, "may be full of it now."

Kersdale shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Who can say? It takes seven years for it to incubate. If you have any doubts go and see Doctor Hervey. He'll just snip out a piece of your skin and let you know in a jiffy."

Later on he introduced me to Dr. Hervey, who loaded me down with Board of Health reports and pamphlets on the subject, and took me out to Kalihi, the Honolulu receiving station, where suspects were examined and confirmed lepers were held for deportation to Molokai. These deportations occurred about once a month, when, the last good-byes said, the lepers were marched on board the little steamer, the _Noeau_, and carried down to the settlement.

One afternoon, writing letters at the club, Jack Kersdale dropped in on me.

"Just the man I want to see," was his greeting. "I'll show you the saddest aspect of the whole situation--the lepers wailing as they depart for Molokai. The _Noeau_ will be taking them on board in a few minutes. But let me warn you not to let your feelings be harrowed. Real as their grief is, they'd wail a whole sight harder a year hence if the Board of Health tried to take them away from Molokai. We've just time for a

whiskey and soda. I've a carriage outside. It won't take us five minutes to get down to the wharf."

To the wharf we drove. Some forty sad wretches, amid their mats, blankets, and luggage of various sorts, were squatting on the stringer piece. The Noeau had just arrived and was making fast to a lighter that lay between her and the wharf. A Mr. McVeigh, the superintendent of the settlement, was overseeing the embarkation, and to him I was introduced, also to Dr. Georges, one of the Board of Health physicians whom I had already met at Kalihi. The lepers were a woebegone lot. The faces of the majority were hideous--too horrible for me to describe. But here and there I noticed fairly good-looking persons, with no apparent signs of the fell disease upon them. One, I noticed, a little white girl, not more than twelve, with blue eyes and golden hair. One cheek, however, showed the leprous bloat. On my remarking on the sadness of her alien situation among the brown-skinned afflicted ones, Doctor Georges replied:--

"Oh, I don't know. It's a happy day in her life. She comes from Kauai. Her father is a brute. And now that she has developed the disease she is going to join her mother at the settlement. Her mother was sent down three years ago--a very bad case."

"You can't always tell from appearances," Mr. McVeigh explained. "That man there, that big chap, who looks the pink of condition, with nothing the matter with him, I happen to know has a perforating ulcer in his foot and another in his shoulder-blade. Then there are others--there, see that girl's hand, the one who is smoking the cigarette. See her twisted fingers. That's the anaesthetic form. It attacks the nerves. You could cut her fingers off with a dull knife, or rub them off on a nutmeg-grater, and she would not experience the slightest sensation."

"Yes, but that fine-looking woman, there," I persisted; "surely, surely, there can't be anything the matter with her. She is too glorious and gorgeous altogether."

"A sad case," Mr. McVeigh answered over his shoulder, already turning away to walk down the wharf with Kersdale.

She was a beautiful woman, and she was pure Polynesian. From my meagre knowledge of the race and its types I could not but conclude that she had descended from old chief stock. She could not have been more than twenty-three or four. Her lines and proportions were magnificent, and she was just beginning to show the amplitude of the women of her race.

"It was a blow to all of us," Dr. Georges volunteered. "She gave herself up voluntarily, too. No one suspected. But somehow she had contracted the disease. It broke us all up, I assure you. We've kept it out of the papers, though. Nobody but us and her family knows what has become of

her. In fact, if you were to ask any man in Honolulu, he'd tell you it was his impression that she was somewhere in Europe. It was at her request that we've been so quiet about it. Poor girl, she has a lot of pride."

"But who is she?" I asked. "Certainly, from the way you talk about her, she must be somebody."

"Did you ever hear of Lucy Mokunui?" he asked.

"Lucy Mokunui?" I repeated, haunted by some familiar association. I shook my head. "It seems to me I've heard the name, but I've forgotten it."

"Never heard of Lucy Mokunui! The Hawaiian nightingale! I beg your pardon. Of course you are a malahini, {1} and could not be expected to know. Well, Lucy Mokunui was the best beloved of Honolulu--of all Hawaii, for that matter."

"You say was," I interrupted.

"And I mean it. She is finished." He shrugged his shoulders pityingly. "A dozen haoles--I beg your pardon, white men--have lost their hearts to her at one time or another. And I'm not counting in the ruck. The dozen I refer to were haoles of position and prominence."

"She could have married the son of the Chief Justice if she'd wanted to. You think she's beautiful, eh? But you should hear her sing. Finest native woman singer in Hawaii Nei. Her throat is pure silver and melted sunshine. We adored her. She toured America first with the Royal Hawaiian Band. After that she made two more trips on her own--concert work."

"Oh!" I cried. "I remember now. I heard her two years ago at the Boston Symphony. So that is she. I recognize her now."

I was oppressed by a heavy sadness. Life was a futile thing at best. A short two years and this magnificent creature, at the summit of her magnificent success, was one of the leper squad awaiting deportation to Molokai. Henley's lines came into my mind:--

"The poor old tramp explains his poor old ulcers;
Life is, I think, a blunder and a shame."

I recoiled from my own future. If this awful fate fell to Lucy Mokunui, what might my lot not be?--or anybody's lot? I was thoroughly aware that in life we are in the midst of death--but to be in the midst of living death, to die and not be dead, to be one of that draft of creatures that once were men, aye, and women, like Lucy Mokunui, the epitome of all

Polynesian charms, an artist as well, and well beloved of men--. I am afraid I must have betrayed my perturbation, for Doctor Georges hastened to assure me that they were very happy down in the settlement.

It was all too inconceivably monstrous. I could not bear to look at her. A short distance away, behind a stretched rope guarded by a policeman, were the lepers' relatives and friends. They were not allowed to come near. There were no last embraces, no kisses of farewell. They called back and forth to one another--last messages, last words of love, last reiterated instructions. And those behind the rope looked with terrible intensity. It was the last time they would behold the faces of their loved ones, for they were the living dead, being carted away in the funeral ship to the graveyard of Molokai.

Doctor Georges gave the command, and the unhappy wretches dragged themselves to their feet and under their burdens of luggage began to stagger across the lighter and aboard the steamer. It was the funeral procession. At once the wailing started from those behind the rope. It was blood-curdling; it was heart-rending. I never heard such woe, and I hope never to again. Kersdale and McVeigh were still at the other end of the wharf, talking earnestly--politics, of course, for both were head-over-heels in that particular game. When Lucy Mokunui passed me, I stole a look at her. She was beautiful. She was beautiful by our standards, as well--one of those rare blossoms that occur but once in generations. And she, of all women, was doomed to Molokai. She straight on board, and aft on the open deck where the lepers huddled by the rail, wailing now, to their dear ones on shore.

The lines were cast off, and the Noeau began to move away from the wharf. The wailing increased. Such grief and despair! I was just resolving that never again would I be a witness to the sailing of the Noeau, when McVeigh and Kersdale returned. The latter's eyes were sparkling, and his lips could not quite hide the smile of delight that was his. Evidently the politics they had talked had been satisfactory. The rope had been flung aside, and the lamenting relatives now crowded the stringer piece on either side of us.

"That's her mother," Doctor Georges whispered, indicating an old woman next to me, who was rocking back and forth and gazing at the steamer rail out of tear-blinded eyes. I noticed that Lucy Mokunui was also wailing. She stopped abruptly and gazed at Kersdale. Then she stretched forth her arms in that adorable, sensuous way that Olga Nethersole has of embracing an audience. And with arms outspread, she cried:

"Good-bye, Jack! Good-bye!"

He heard the cry, and looked. Never was a man overtaken by more crushing fear. He reeled on the stringer piece, his face went white to the roots of his hair, and he seemed to shrink and wither away inside his clothes.

He threw up his hands and groaned, "My God! My God!" Then he controlled himself by a great effort.

"Good-bye, Lucy! Good-bye!" he called.

And he stood there on the wharf, waving his hands to her till the _Noeau_ was clear away and the faces lining her after-rail were vague and indistinct.

"I thought you knew," said McVeigh, who had been regarding him curiously. "You, of all men, should have known. I thought that was why you were here."

"I know now," Kersdale answered with immense gravity. "Where's the carriage?"

He walked rapidly--half-ran--to it. I had to half-run myself to keep up with him.

"Drive to Doctor Hervey's," he told the driver. "Drive as fast as you can."

He sank down in a seat, panting and gasping. The pallor of his face had increased. His lips were compressed and the sweat was standing out on his forehead and upper lip. He seemed in some horrible agony.

"For God's sake, Martin, make those horses go!" he broke out suddenly. "Lay the whip into them!--do you hear?--lay the whip into them!"

"They'll break, sir," the driver remonstrated.

"Let them break," Kersdale answered. "I'll pay your fine and square you with the police. Put it to them. That's right. Faster! Faster!"

"And I never knew, I never knew," he muttered, sinking back in the seat and with trembling hands wiping the sweat away.

The carriage was bouncing, swaying and lurching around corners at such a wild pace as to make conversation impossible. Besides, there was nothing to say. But I could hear him muttering over and over, "And I never knew. I never knew."